OFFICIAL U.S.
PlayStation
MAGAZINE
WWW.1UP.COM

SONY
14
GOAL 1
GATES 6
BEST
NEED FOR SPEED
UNDERGROUND
RIVALS
N2O
4
125 MPH
POWER
HOLD

Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine Issue 89 (February 2005)

PSP
HOME
VOL
SONY
BIG
FIFA
MVP BASEBALL
TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR
POWER
HOLD
SELECT
START

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PlayStation 2

INSOMNIAC GAMES

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TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

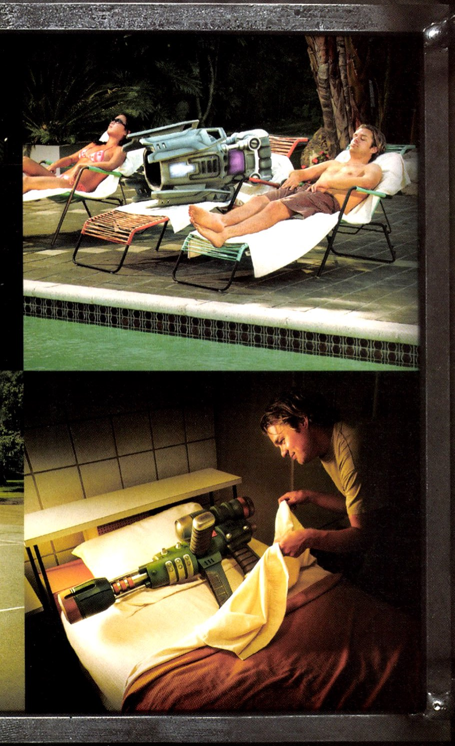
Crude Humor
Fantasy Violence

LIVE IN YOUR WORLD.
PLAY IN OURS.

TIME WITH EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM.

Ratchet & Clank

UP YOUR ARSENAL



This time the destruction is personal. Take on fellow destructophiles from across the nation online. Upgrade weapons to planet-vaporizing levels of firepower. Nuke enemies and friends alike in the single-player and split-screen multiplayer modes. Blast, whip, electrocute or melt your way through amazing new galaxies. So lock, load and gather the troops. You've got some destroying to do.

PlayStation 2
Ratchet & Clank
UP YOUR ARSENAL
TEEN
ESRB
INSOMNIAC
ONLINE

NOW ONLINE

BEYOND THE LIMITS OF MANKIND

PROJECT: SNOWBLIND™

01 FLSH
05 44
New English Text
Reloading
01 RIOT
100
05 FRAG
15 210

"Unprecedented stream of battlefield chaos"
- Play

"Sheer graphical beauty"
- OPM

"Unabashed balls-to-the-wall action"
- XBN

"All those weapons mean the possibilities are up to your imagination"
- Electronic Gaming Monthly

"The Future of War"
- Game Informer

"Multiplayer shines in Snowblind"
- PSM

TEEN T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

BLOOD
VIOLENCE

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

PlayStation®2

ONLINE
BROADBAND ONLY

XBOX
XBOX LIVE
www.projectsnowblind.com
CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
eidos

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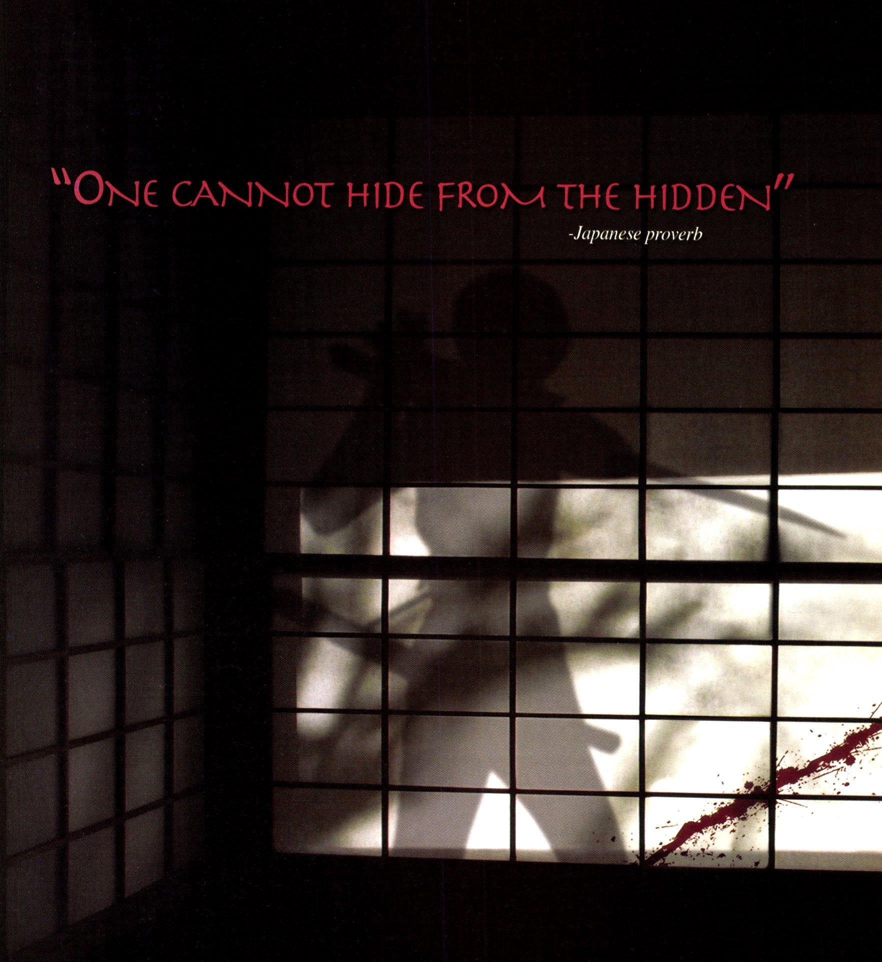
"ONE CANNOT HIDE FROM THE HIDDEN"
-Japanese proverb

MATURE 17+
M
Blood
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

PlayStation 2

SEGA

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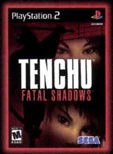
PlayStation 2
TENCHU
FATAL SHADOWS
M
SEGA

Strike in silence. See and never be seen. The art of the ninja. An art mastered by two assassins, Rin and Ayame. Deadly swordplay. Ferocious hand-to-hand combat. And simultaneous multi-kill death moves. All executed without a sound. TENCHU® Fatal Shadows.™ It's like nothing you've ever seen.

THE SHADOWS BECKON AT SEGA.COM/TENCHU

TENCHU®
FATAL SHADOWS™

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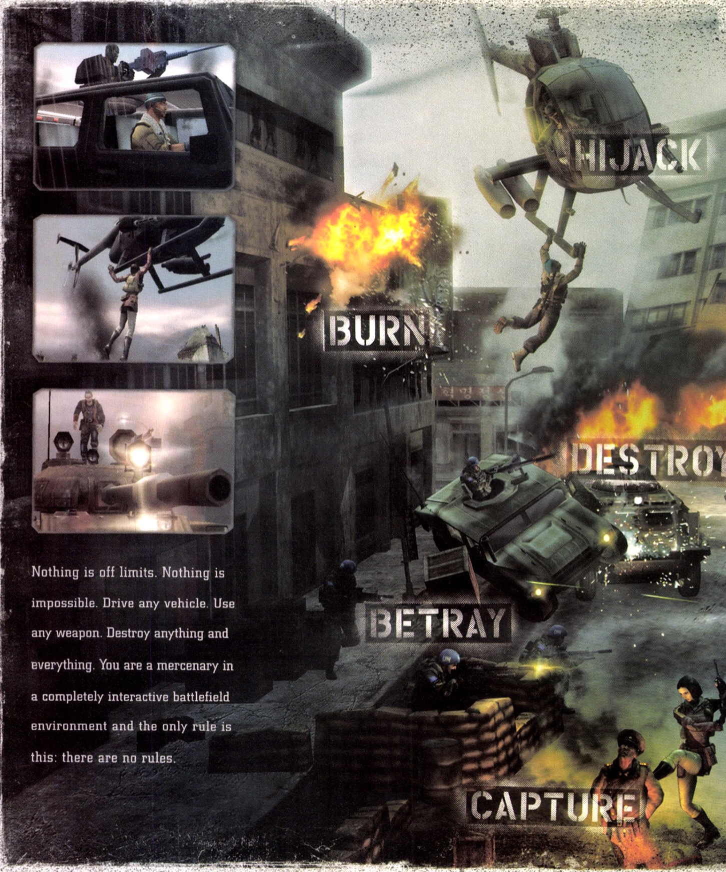
OR DIE BY IT.



Nothing is off limits. Nothing is impossible. Drive any vehicle. Use any weapon. Destroy anything and everything. You are a mercenary in a completely interactive battlefield environment and the only rule is this: there are no rules.

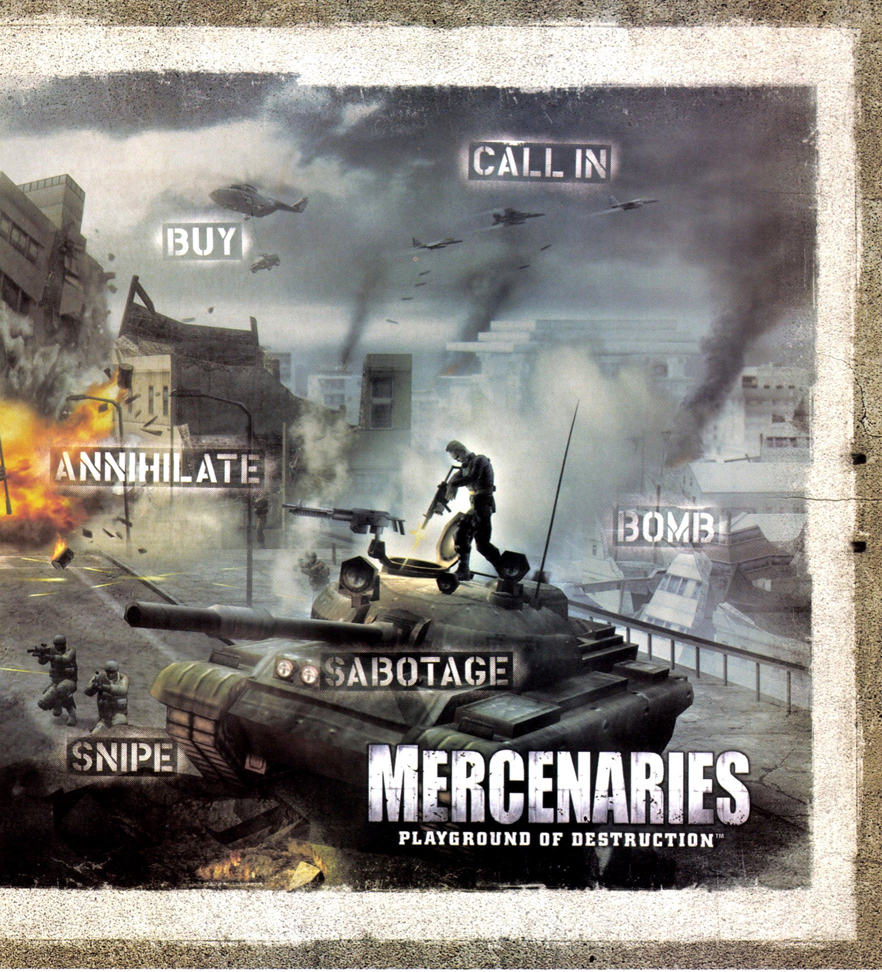
TEEN
T
Mild Language
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

XBOX

PANDEMIC

PlayStation 2

LUCAS Arts


CALL IN
BUY
ANNIHILATE
BOMB
SABOTAGE
SNIPE
MERCENARIES
PLAYGROUND OF DESTRUCTION™

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COVER STORY PSP

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Do you like us? Do you really, really like us? Then tell us at opm@ziffdavis.com.

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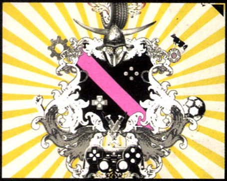


98

REWIND

114 FIVE YEARS AGO...
The future of gaming was in pro wrestling.

POS 2/6
LAP 1/1
114 mph
AT 5
RACING

BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN

RUNNER UP: NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2

In a year that was jam-packed with similar racing games, it's telling that the overwhelming winner in this category is *Burnout 3* and not *Underground 2*. *Need for Speed* is now Electronic Arts' biggest franchise, outselling even *Madden* last year, but in our minds, you can't beat a joypad-passing, smack-talking, fast-paced *Burnout* session. With *Takedown*, Criterion took a niche franchise that only diehards had heard of and turned it into a world-dominating example of what racing videogames used to be about before everyone got obsessed with all this tedious realism.

2P 脱出
MOST INNOVATIVE

KATAMARI DAMACY

RUNNER UP: PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

The second near-miss of the awards for Midway's *Psi-Ops*, although we're sure the team at Midway will happily concede this one, as Namco's *Katamari Damacy* is one of the zaniest groundbreaking games since Mizuguchi rocked us with *Rez* back in 2001. Who would have thought that rolling a ball around and picking up garbage would be so much fun? At only $20, there's no excuse not to own it, and the gameplay is so intuitive that even your grandma will want to play. Seriously. One of ours did.

3/8
644
Retaliate
AUTO
1 Jayce HP 999 MP 885
2 Dante HP 999 MP 603
4 Samael HP 876 MP 420
3 Metatron HP 999 MP 612
RPG

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: NOCTURNE

RUNNER UP: THE BARD'S TALE

In the first year in living memory that didn't feature a *Final Fantasy* game to clean up in this category (*Final Fantasy XI*, being online-only, didn't quite make the cut), the little guys got a crack at the title, and boy was it a tough fight. On one hand, there's the cynical but wonderfully written dungeon crawl *The Bard's Tale*, and on the other, there's Atlus' postapocalyptic, demon-breeding, Dante-starring, gorgeous-looking freak show that three out of five PS2 owners can't pronounce correctly. *Shin Megami* eventually clambered its way to the top, and deservedly so. It's a beautiful game that proves that Japanese developers are much more effective at channeling the results of their evenings of taking bong hits than their American counterparts.

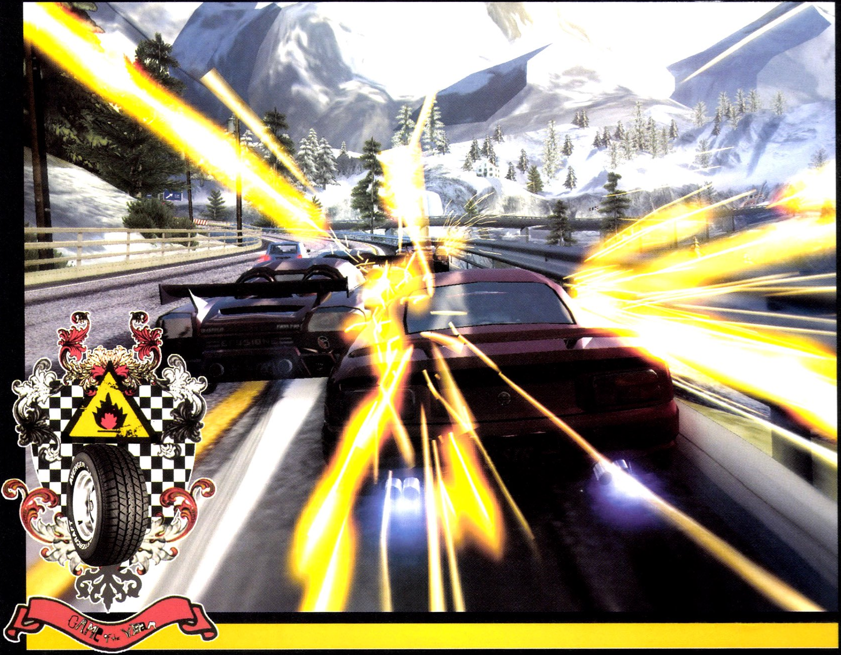
CARLING
CARLING
SPORTS

FIFA SOCCER 2005

RUNNER UP: MADDEN NFL 2005

For years, the team at EA Sports has been standing in the shadow of Konami's incredible *Winning Eleven* series of soccer games, and hardcore soccer fans would probably have punched you (or hit you with something blunt, depending on what part of the world they were from) for even suggesting that the evil American corporate empire could ever pull ahead. This past year, the impossible happened, though. *FIFA Soccer 2005* was widely accepted as being the superior soccer sim, and the skies rained blood, cats got it on with dogs, Sony made a game and left the online mode intact, and the Red Sox won the World Series. Oh, wait, that last one actually happened.

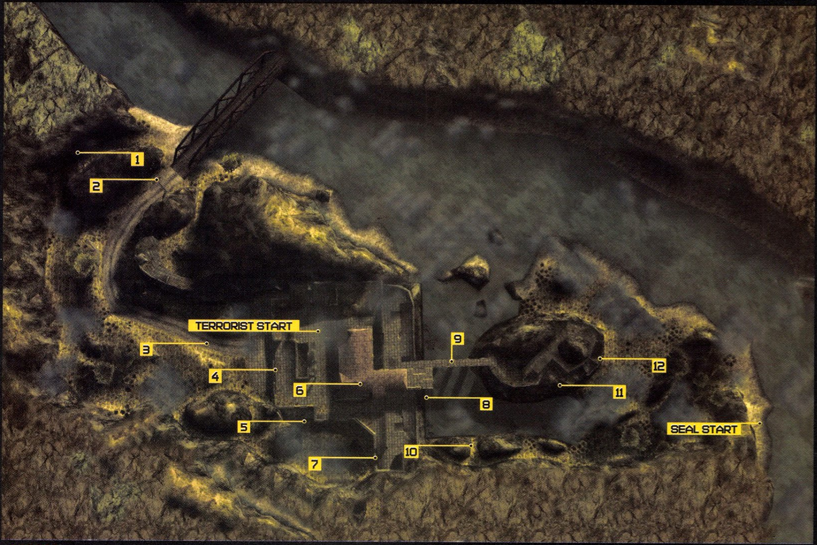
IMPACT TIME



BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN

RUNNER UP: GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

Bet you didn't see this one coming, eh? Neither did we. *GTA* seemed like the obvious choice pre-vote, but apparently everyone isn't swayed by a game just because it's frickin' awesome and will sell a million zillion copies—we're not that logical around here. Let's not beat about the bush, though; *Burnout 3* won Game of the Year because it's fun. Plain and simple. We all appreciate how wonderful *San Andreas* is, and we know that you all probably own it anyway, so it almost seems redundant to award it yet another accolade. What difference would it make? None. Will *Burnout 3* winning make some kind of difference? Possibly. When we were playing *Takedown* on a daily basis, there were nine of us in the *OPM* office who would routinely play the thing competitively. We'd stay late after work when we had no work-related reason to do so and then proceed to play the game until our thumbs got those nasty little calluses that form when you lean on the ⊗ button for too long. We'd make wild declarations about the number of takedowns we'd made; we'd send screenshots of crash mode totals to each other with our cell phones and goad each other to play in the middle of the night; we'd post images and make wild boasts in our 1UP blogs. This game got under our skin, and that feeling is still there. For these reasons, it's our Game of the Year.



SOCOM II: LAST BASTION

THE BIGGEST–AND POSSIBLY BEST–OF THE BREACH MAPS

You crafty terrorists are going to love the downloadable map we've included on the disc this month. Last Bastion, like Inowapi, is one of those breach maps in which the terrorists can, if they so choose, simply drop mines like crazy and huddle around the bomb-drop like a pack of terrified dogs. The key here for the SEAL team is numbers—fully staffed teams can work together in ways that four- or five-man squads can't.

SEALS

You've got your work cut out for you, men. But this level isn't unbeatable. Unlike Inowapi, there's no place for a terrorist to feel completely safe from a well-placed grenade—even if you haven't yet penetrated the inner sanctum. Your best bet is to swing the majority of the SEAL team out into the river, staying well hidden behind the low walls, where you'll be untouchable by all but the craftiest snipers. Head out to 1 and 2—try to coordinate the planting of C4 so that both barriers go down at once.

Get as close to the inner walls as possible, taking special care to avoid the natural ambush point at 3. (You're also going to want to keep an eye out for mines—or terrorists—stashed in the copious undergrowth.) Once you're flat against the wall, get the whole team to start lobbing grenades into the compound simultaneously; you're likely to take out a few terrorists this way with sheer dumb luck. Also, don't neglect the solid snipe points at 10; you can reach them reasonably undetected and use them to toss grenades into the southern end of the compound.

You're also not going to want to be shy with the grenades when you enter the building where the bomb is planted at 6; chances are good that every step will be mined. Climb up to the second floor and drop down from the balcony to avoid the worst of it.

TERRORISTS

Here's an especially terrorist-friendly design element: If you close the gates at 4 and 7, the SEALs will have to either blow two sets of doors or try to streak across the bridge of death at 9. Even the tunnel from the waterline door at 8 leads to an area outside the inner sanctum at 5. So first things first: Close the gates, post guards on the bridge, and have a sniper or two watch the three rear entry points.

Now, any SEAL who knows his business isn't going to try the bridge more than once or twice. So once you've discouraged them from approaching through the breach point at 11, try rushing to 12 and dropping down to sea level; maybe you can sneak up behind the SEALs as they try to swing wide to the north.

If you want to get really crafty, look around the bomb room at 6—notice how most of the entrances require a step down into the room. That means you can place a mine in such a way that it's virtually invisible to anyone coming in from that direction. While we're on the subject of mines, remember that if you place a mine in the middle of a bush it's all but undetectable. You may also notice that the area behind the fortress (you know, the place where the SEALs will come in 90 percent of the time) is very heavily covered with thick ground foliage. You do the math.

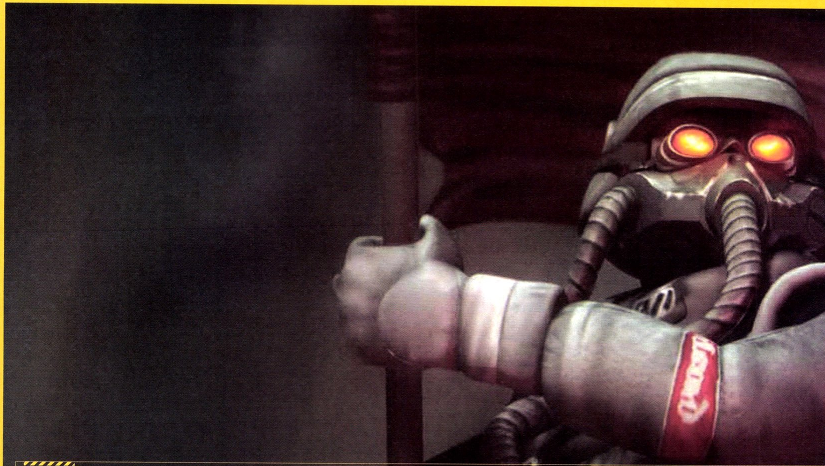
PS2 TRICKS AND REVIEW ARCHIVE

Game names in black bars indicate a Greatest Hits title. Names in yellow indicate a score of 5 out of 5. ⚡ indicates the game supports online play.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
.hack//INFECTION	Bandai	●●●◖	65
.hack//MUTATION	Bandai	●●●●	69
.hack//OUTBREAK	Bandai	●●●●	73
.hack//QUARANTINE	Bandai	●●●●	76
18 Wheeler American Pro Trucker	Acclaim	●●●●	52
4x4 EVO	GOD Games	●●●●	44
2002 FIFA World Cup	EA Sports	●●●●	58
Ace Combat 04: Shattered Skies	**Namco**	**●●●●◖**	**51**
Ace Combat 5: The Unsung War	Namco	●●●●	87
Activision Anthology	Activision	●●●●	64
Aero Elite: Combat Academy	Sega	●●●	67
The Adventures of Cookie & Cream	Agetec	●●●◖	44
Aggressive Inline	Acclaim	●●●●◖	59
Airblade	Namco	●●●●	53
Airforce Delta Strike	Konami	●●●	78
Alias	Acclaim	●●◖	81
Alien Hominid	0-3 Entertainment	●●●●	88
Aliens Versus Predator: Extinction	EA Games	●●●◖	72
All-Star Baseball 2002	Acclaim	●●●◖	44
All-Star Baseball 2003	Acclaim	●●●◖	56
All-Star Baseball 2004	Acclaim	●●●	67
⚡All-Star Baseball 2005	Acclaim	●●◖	80
Alter Echo	THQ	●●	73
American Idol	Codemasters	●	77
⚡Amplitude	Sony CEA	●●●●	68
Antz Extreme Racing	Empire	●◖	61
Ape Escape 2	Ubisoft	●●●●◖	70
Ape Escape: Primed & Pumped	Ubisoft	●●◖	88
Aqua Aqua	3DO	●●	42
Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits	Sony CEA	●●●●	70
Arctic Thunder	Midway	●	50
Armored Core 2	Agetec	●●●	39
Armored Core 2: Another Age	Agetec	●●●◖	48
Armored Core 3	Agetec	●●●◖	61
Armored Core: Nexus	Agetec	●●	85
Army Men: Air Attack	3DO	●●●◖	44
Army Men: Green Rogue	3DO	●●	45
Army Men RTS	3DO	●●●●	56
Army Men: Sarge's Heroes 2	3DO	●●◖	45
Asterix & Obelix Kick Buttix	Atari	●●◖	85
Astro Boy	Sega	●●●	85
Athens 2004	Sony CEA	●●◖	83
ATV Offroad Fury	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●**	**42**
⚡ATV Offroad Fury 2	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●**	**64**
⚡ATV Offroad Fury 3	Sony CEA	●●●●	88
ATV Quad Power Racing 2	Acclaim	●●●●	66
⚡Auto Modellista	Capcom	●●◖	69
Backyard Baseball	Atari	●●◖	81
Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try This at Home	Eidos	●●◖	75
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	**Interplay**	**●●●●◖**	**52**
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II	Interplay	●●●◖	77
Barbarian	Titus	●●	57
The Bard's Tale	Vivendi Universal	●●●●◖	86
Bass Strike Virtual Fishing Tournament	THQ	●◖	51
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	Ubisoft	●●	74
Batman: Vengeance	Ubisoft	●●●	51
Battle Assault 3	Bandai	●●◖	88
Battle Engine Aquila	Atari	●●●◖	65
Battlestar Galactica	Vivendi Universal	●●●	76
Beyond Good & Evil	Ubisoft	●●●●	75
Big Mutha Truckers	Empire	●●●	71
Bionicle: The Game	EA Games	●●◖	75
Black & Bruised	Majesco	●●●●	67
Blade II	Activision	●●	62
Blood Omen 2	Eidos	●●●◖	57
BloodRayne	Majesco	●●●◖	63
BloodRayne 2	Majesco	●●●●◖	87
Blood Will Tell	Sega	●●●●	87
Bloody Roar 3	Activision	●●●◖	47
Bloody Roar 4	Konami	●	75
Blowout	Majesco	●●●	77
BMX XXX	Acclaim	●◖	65
Bombastic	Capcom	●●◖	72
Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter	Capcom	●●●●	67
Britney's Dance Beat	THQ	●●●●	58
The Bouncer	Square EA	●●●	42
Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds	Sierra/Fox	●●●◖	73
Bujingai: The Forsaken City	Bam	●●●●	82
Burnout	Acclaim	●●●●◖	52
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	Acclaim	●●●●	63
⚡Burnout 3: Takedown	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**85**
Butt-Ugly Martians: Zoom or Doom!	Crave	●●	73
Cabela's Big Game Hunter	**Activision**	**●●◖**	**67**
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts	**Activision**	**●●◖**	**76**
Cabela's Deer Hunt 2004 Season	Activision	●●◖	74
Cabela's Deer Hunt 2005 Season	Activision	●●●●◖	85
Capcom Fighting Evolution	Capcom	●◖	88
Capcom vs. SNK 2	Capcom	●●●●◖	51
Carmen Sandiego: The Secret of the Stolen Drums	Bam	●●◖	77
CART Fury	Midway	●	47
Casper: Spirit Dimensions	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	50
Castlevania: Lament of Innocence	Konami	●●●●	74
The Cat in the Hat	Vivendi Universal	●●	76
Catwoman	EA Games	●	84
⚡Champions of Norrath: Realms of EverQuest	Sony Online	●●●●◖	78
Chaos Legion	Capcom	●●●◖	70
⚡Chessmaster	Ubisoft	●●●◖	70
Choplifter: Crisis Shield	Xicat	●●●	69
ChoroQ	Atlus	●●●◖	86
City Crisis	Take-Two	●●●	48
Clock Tower 3	Capcom	●●●	68
Combat Elite: WWII Paratroopers	Acclaim	●●●	83
Colin McRae Rally 3	**Codemasters**	**●●●●●**	**68**
Commandos 2: Men of Courage	Eidos	●●	62
Conflict: Desert Storm	**Gotham Games**	**●◖**	**63**
Conflict: Desert Storm II	Gotham Games	●●●	74
Conflict: Vietnam	Global Star	●●◖	86
Conflict Zone	Ubisoft	●●◖	63
Contra: Shattered Soldier	Konami	●●●●◖	64
Corvette	Global Star	●●●◖	81
Cool Boarders 2001	Sony CEA	●●●●	46
Crash Bandicoot: The Wrath of Cortex	**Universal**	**●●●◖**	**51**
⚡Crash 'N' Burn	Eidos	●●	87
Crash Nitro Kart	**Vivendi Universal**	**●●●◖**	**76**
Crash Twinsanity	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	86
Crazy Taxi	**Acclaim**	**●●●●**	**46**
Crimson Sea 2	Koei	●●●◖	80
Crimson Tears	Capcom	●●●◖	83
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	Ubisoft	●●	74
Culdcept	SNK	●●●◖	75
Dark Angel: Vampire Apocalypse	Metro3D	●◖	49
Dark Cloud	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●◖**	**46**
Dark Cloud 2	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**66**
Dark Summit	THQ	●●●◖	52
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	**Acclaim**	**●●●◖**	**50**
DDR Extreme	Konami	●●●●	85
DDRMAX	Konami	●●●●	63
DDRMAX 2	Konami	●●●●	74
Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore	Tecmo	●●●●◖	39
Dead to Rights	**Namco**	**●●●**	**65**
Def Jam Vendetta	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●**	**67**
Def Jam Fight for NY	EA Games	●●●●◖	85
Defender	Midway	●●●◖	62
⚡Destruction Derby Arenas	Gathering	●●◖	80
Deus Ex: The Conspiracy	Eidos	●●●●◖	56
Devil May Cry	**Capcom**	**●●●●●**	**50**
Devil May Cry 2	**Capcom**	**●●●**	**66**
Digimon Rumble Arena 2	Bandai	●●●	88
Digital Hitz Factory	XS Games	●●●●	76
Dino Stalker	Capcom	●●●◖	61
Disaster Report	Agetec	●●●◖	65
Disgaea: Hour of Darkness	Atlus	●●●●	72
Disney Golf	EA Games	●●●●	61
Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure	Activision	●●●●	73
Disney's PK: Out of the Shadows	Ubisoft	●●◖	63
Disney's Treasure Planet	Sony CEA	●●●◖	64
A Dog's Life	Hip Interactive	●●	84
Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers	Ubisoft	●●●◖	42
Downforce	Titus	●●	57
Downhill Domination	Sony CEA	●●●●	71
Dr. Muto	Midway	●●◖	63
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai	**Atari**	**●●●◖**	**65**
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2	**Atari**	**●●◖**	**76**
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 3	Atari	●●●●	88
Dragon Rage	3DO	●◖	54
Drakan: The Ancients' Gates	Sony CEA	●●●●	53
Drakengard	Square Enix USA	●●	78
DRIV3R	Atari	●●●◖	83
Driven	Bam	●	52
Driving Emotion Type-S	Square EA	●●◖	41
Drome Racers	EA Games	●●◖	64
Dropship	Bam	●●●●	57
Dual Hearts	Atlus	●●●	61
The Dukes of Hazzard: Return of the General Lee	Ubisoft	●●●◖	87
Dynasty Tactics	Koei	●●●●◖	61
Dynasty Tactics 2	Koei	●●●●	74
Dynasty Warriors 2	Koei	●●●●	38
Dynasty Warriors 3	Koei	●●●●	52
Dynasty Warriors 3: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●◖	65
Dynasty Warriors 4	Koei	●●●●◖	68
Dynasty Warriors 4: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●◖	75
Dynasty Warriors 4: Empires	**Koei**	**●●●●**	**85**
Ecco the Dolphin: Defender of the Future	Acclaim	●●◖	56
Echo Night: Beyond	Agetec	●●●	84
Egg Mania: Eggstreme Madness	Kemco	●●◖	61
⚡eJay Clubworld	Crave	●●	73
Endgame	Empire	●●	59
Enter the Matrix	**Atari**	**●●●**	**71**
Ephemeral Fantasia	Konami	●◖	49
Escape from Monkey Island	**LucasArts**	**●●●●●**	**46**
⚡ESPN College Hoops	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	76
⚡ESPN College Hoops 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	88
ESPN International Track & Field	Konami	●●●	39
ESPN International Winter Sports 2002	Konami	●●●●	54
⚡ESPN Major League Baseball	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	80
ESPN MLS Extra Time	Konami	●●	44
ESPN National Hockey Night	Konami	●◖	45
ESPN NBA 2Night	Konami	●●	42
ESPN NBA 2Night 2002	Konami	●●●	56
⚡ESPN NBA 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●●	87
⚡ESPN NBA Basketball	**ESPN Videogames**	**●●●●●**	**75**
⚡ESPN NFL Football	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	72
⚡ESPN NHL Hockey	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	73
⚡ESPN NHL 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	85
ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding	Konami	●●●	41
ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding 2002	Konami	●●●	53
ESPN X Games Skateboarding	Konami	●●●●	49
Eternal Ring	Agetec	●●	38
Eve of Extinction	Eidos	●●◖	56
Everblue 2	Capcom	●●●	66
Evergrace	Agetec	●●	39
⚡EverQuest Online Adventures	Sony Online	●●◖	66
⚡EverQuest Online Adventures: Frontiers	Sony Online	●●●◖	77
Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick	THQ	●●●	70
Evil Twin	Ubisoft	●●	52
Evolution Skateboarding	Konami	●●◖	63
Evolution Snowboarding	Konami	●	65
Extermination	Sony CEA	●●◖	48
Extreme-G III	Acclaim	●●●●	50
EyeToy: AntiGrav	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	87
EyeToy: Groove	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	80
F1 2001	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**52**
F1 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	60
F1 Career Challenge	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**71**
F1 Championship	Ubisoft	●●●●	43
F1 Championship Season 2000	EA Sports	●●◖	41
Fairly OddParents: Shadow Showdown	THQ	●●●◖	88
Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel	Interplay	●●◖	78
Fantavision	Sony CEA	●●●●	40
Fatal Frame	Tecmo	●●●●	55
Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly	Tecmo	●●●●	77
Ferrari F355 Challenge	Sega	●●	61
FIFA 2001 Major League Soccer	EA Sports	●●●●◖	39
FIFA 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	51

BARGAIN HUNTER

Looking for a fun, quick, pick-up-and-play arcade-style game on the cheap? Check out *City Crisis*. Its search-and-rescue firefighting gameplay didn't make waves when it first came out, but it's a pleasant diversion if you find it in the $10 bin.



ENTER THE KILLZONE

THE DUST HAS CLEARED AND THE HELGHAST ARE DEAD. WE CHAT WITH GUERRILLA GAMES' ALISTAIR BURNS IN THE AFTERMATH OF SONY'S DARK FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER, KILLZONE.

Right from the get-go, *Killzone* has had a particularly interesting ride down hype street. Once the first screens hit the Web last year, the press was immediately calling the game "PlayStation 2's *Halo* killer"—a somewhat unwarranted reputation that preceded it all the way until it hit shelves in November. And the controversy didn't end there; since its release, *Killzone* has been one of the more hotly debated titles in recent memory, spawning as many devoted fans as it has ardent naysayers. We spoke with Alistair Burns, *Killzone*'s product manager at Guerrilla Games, about the long, windy road his game has taken.

OPM How did the term "*Halo* killer" come about in regards to *Killzone*? It seemed that very shortly after the game was announced, *Killzone* generated an incredible amount of hype.

Alistair Burns We're not entirely sure, I must admit. The cynic in me would suggest that it was invented by the media to sell magazines...but that surely could not be the truth...could it? Wherever it came from, we were initially flattered by the comparison. *Halo* has done a lot for the FPS genre on this particular generation of consoles. We don't really see ourselves in competition, though. We're exclusive to PS2, and *Killzone* is essentially a very gritty war experience, dumping the player right between two armies. *Halo* strives for something different.

OPM What was the most difficult thing about the creation of *Killzone*?

AB Getting our heads around PS2 technology. We were a PC developer before we got our hands on the PS2. There is a huge difference between developing for PC (tons of memory, huge textures, many options to configure, etc.) and the PS2 (a distinct memory budget, teeny textures, an intuitive design that is very easy to get to grips with).

OPM People seem to love or hate *Killzone*; why do you think this is?

AB I can't really speak for people as a whole. I'm sure you've encountered people with opinions on *OPM*.... See, the thing is, people always have an opinion one way or another and they also feel a need to express them...especially when they are passionate about something. We're excited that so many people are discussing our game. Just know this:

"HALO KILLER"? ER...NOT EXACTLY

Halo 2 claimed the No. 1 *and* No. 2 spots (special edition, you see) on EB's multisystem game sales chart for November, beating *San Andreas* and selling over 5 million copies worldwide. *Killzone,* while reaching No. 13 on the PS2 chart, has yet to crack the top 25 across all systems.

We're listening to the arguments between those who love the game and those who I guess don't, and we're taking notes.

OPM What was your philosophy with the enemy A.I. in *Killzone*? Were you trying to do anything particularly different from other games?

AB We decided very early on that we wanted intelligent enemies who the player could read well and understand what their intentions were. We also decided not to allow the enemy to cheat, so they use their eyes and ears only. If they can't see or hear you, they do not know that you exist (unless you already revealed yourself, and then they'll be hunting you!) We also wanted the enemy to react as a squad, so we gave them as many tactical options as possible—all researched from various armies.

OPM *Killzone* has a striking visual impact. What were some of your sources of inspiration for both the characters and the environments?

AB The inspiration came directly from the past and present military and the world we live in. The visual style can be traced to the objects and environments that surround us. We built a city and a planet, so we took inspiration from our own. This way everything in *Killzone* remains recognizable; you can actually believe that you are on Vekta, that the gun in your hand is heavy...you know how everything should work.

OPM Why the decision not to have a soundtrack in *Killzone* during gameplay? Was this a technical choice, a creative choice, or both?

AB We often find that music during gameplay can be misleading, simply difficult to time, and may drown out the action. We thought, why put all this effort into music when the player may find it obtrusive? So we only play music when you are paying full attention to it—during cut-scenes and in the menu screens. The limited edition box also has a few choice tracks.

OPM What is your favorite FPS (aside from *Killzone,* of course) and why?

AB It's a sheer toss-up between *Half-Life* and *GoldenEye.* Two very different games, but both had a great narrative, a really strong single-player game, and excellent mechanics. And both became legends when it comes to multiplayer fun.

> "THE INSPIRATION CAME FROM THE PAST AND PRESENT MILITARY."

OPM What would you say is holding videogames back from receiving the respect granted to other mediums such as film and music?

AB Not much, if anything. In the last few years, both DVDs and games have taken a large chunk of market share away other entertainment genres. In general, I'd say that game popularity is on the rise. We are now seeing BAFTAs for games as technology gains momentum. And then, of course, we are able to incorporate movies and music into games; thus, it's a blend of all the genres in one medium. « *Evan Shamoon*

GTA: SAN ANDREAS

CHEAT YOUR WAY TO FAME, FORTUNE, AND A JETPACK

When you are living the thug life in the streets of San Andreas, it can be easy to get in over your head. To help keep the tides in your favor, we have a variety of codes ranging from a little more cash in your pocket and upping your arsenal to a full-fledged jetpack for cruisin' the city. Whichever you choose, remember this: With great power comes great responsibility. Keep it real!

Enter these codes during gameplay. Do not pause.

$250,000, FULL HEALTH AND ARMOR
R1, R1, L1, ⊗, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up

COMMIT SUICIDE
Right, L2, Down, R1, Left, Left, R1, L1, L2, L1

LOWER WANTED LEVEL
R1, R1, □, R2, Up, Down, Up, Down, Up, Down

WEAPONS 1
R1, R2, L1, R2, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up

WEAPONS 2
R1, R2, L1, R2, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Down, Left

WEAPONS 3
R1, R2, L1, R2, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Down, Down

FASTER CLOCK
△, ○, △

FASTER GAMEPLAY
△, Up, Right, Down, L2, L1, □

SLOWER GAMEPLAY
△, Up, Right, Down, □, R2, R1

FOG
R2, ⊗, L1, L1, L2, L2, L2, ⊗

STORM
R2, ⊗, L1, L1, L2, L2, L2, ○

GET A BOUNTY ON YOUR HEAD
Down, Up, Up, Up, ⊗, R2, R1, L2, L2

PEDESTRIAN ATTACK (CANNOT BE TURNED OFF)
Down, Up, Up, Up, ⊗, R2, R1, L2, L2

PEDESTRIAN RIOT (CANNOT BE TURNED OFF)
Down, Left, Up, Left, ⊗, R2, R1, L2, L1

PEDESTRIANS HAVE WEAPONS
R2, R1, ⊗, △, ⊗, △, Up, Down

ALL VEHICLES INVISIBLE (EXCEPT MOTORCYCLES)
△, L1, △, R2, □, L1, L1

AGGRESSIVE TRAFFIC
R2, ○, R1, L2, Left, R1, L1, R2, L2

ALL TRAFFIC LIGHTS STAY GREEN
Right, R1, Up, L2, L2, Left, R1, L1, R1, R1

ALL CARS ARE BLACK
○, L2, Up, R1, Left, ⊗, R1, L1, Left, ○

DRIVE YOUR CAR ON WATER
Right, R2, ○, R1, L2, □, R1, R2

DESTROY YOUR CAR
R2, L2, R1, L1, L2, R2, □, △, ○, △, L2, L1

REPAIR THE VEHICLE YOU ARE IN
R1, R2, L1, ⊗, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up

FASTER CARS
Right, R1, Up, L2, L2, Left, R1, L1, R1, R1

PERFECT HANDLING
△, R1, R1, Left, R1, L1, R2, L1

FLYING BOATS
○, ○, L1, □, L1, □, □, □, L1, R2, ○, Up, L1, Right, R1, Right, Up, □, △

SPAWN A CADDY
○, L1, Up, R1, L2, ⊗, R1, L1, ○, ⊗

SPAWN A RANGER
Up, Right, Right, L1, Right, Up, □, L2

SPAWN A RHINO
○, ○, L1, ○, ○, ○, L1, L2, R1, △, ○, △

SPAWN A STRETCH
R2, Up, L2, Left, Left, R1, L1, ○, Right

SPAWN A BLOODRING BANGER
Down, R1, ○, L2, L2, ⊗, R1, L1, Left, Left

SPAWN A HOTRING RACER #1
R1, ○, R2, Right, L1, L2, ⊗, ⊗, □, R1

SPAWN A HOTRING RACER #2
R2, L1, ○, Right, L1, R1, Right, Up, ○, R2

SPAWN A RANCHER
Up, Right, Right, L1, Right, Up, □, L2

SPAWN A ROMERO
Down, R2, Down, R1, L2, Left, R1, L1, Left, Right

SPAWN A TRASHMASTER
○, R1, ○, R1, Left, Left, R1, L1,○, Right

SPAWN A JETPACK
L1, L2, R1, R2, Up, Down, Left, Right, L1, L2, R1, R2, Up, Down, Left, Right

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
FIFA Soccer 2003	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**63**
⚡**FIFA Soccer 2004**	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**75**
⚡**FIFA Soccer 2005**	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**86**
Fight Club	Vivendi Universal	●◖	87
⚡**Fight Night 2004**	**EA Sports**	●●●●	**80**
Fighter Maker 2	Agetec	●◖	64
Final Fantasy X	**Square EA**	●●●●●	**53**
Final Fantasy X-2	**Square Enix USA**	●●●●●	**75**
⚡**Final Fantasy XI**	**Square Enix USA**	●●●●●	**78**
⚡Final Fantasy XI: Chains of Promathia	Square Enix USA	●●●●	87
Finding Nemo	**THQ**	●●●◖	**71**
Fireblade	Midway	●●◖	59
Fisherman's Challenge	Konami	●●	67
Ford Racing 2	Gotham Games	●●◖	76
Forever Kingdom	Agetec	●◖	53
Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone	Atari	●●●◖	86
Formula One 2001	Sony CEA	●●◖	50
Freaky Flyers	Midway	●●●◖	72
Freedom Fighters	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**73**
Freekstyle	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●	**59**
Freestyle Metal X	Midway	●●●	71
Frequency	Sony CEA	●●●◖	52
Frogger: The Great Quest	Konami	●◖	53
Frogger's Adventure: The Rescue	Konami	●●◖	76
Front Mission 4	Square Enix	●●●●	82
Fugitive Hunter	Encore	●	76
Fur Fighters: Viggo's Revenge	Acclaim	●●●	46
Futurama	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	72
Future Tactics: The Uprising	Crave	●●●◖	81
G1 Jockey 3	Koei	●●●◖	69
Gadget Racers	Conspiracy	●●●◖	50
Galactic Wrestling Featuring Ultimate Muscle	Bandai	●●◖	82
Galerians: Ash	Sammy	●◖	66
Gallop Racer	Tecmo	●●	48
Gallop Racer 2003: A New Breed	Tecmo	●●●	69
Gallop Racer 2004	Tecmo	●●●●	85
Gauntlet: Dark Legacy	Midway	●●●◖	46
The Getaway	Sony CEA	●●●●	66
Get on da Mic	Eidos	●●	87
Ghosthunter	Namco	●●◖	84
Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex	Bandai	●●	87
Giants: Citizen Kabuto	Interplay	●●●◖	51
Gitaroo-Man	Koei	●●●◖	53
Gladiator: Sword of Vengeance	Acclaim	●●	75
Gladius	LucasArts	●●●●	74
Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde	Jaleco	●●◖	76
GoDai: Elemental Force	3DO	●◖	54
Godzilla: Save the Earth	Atari	●●◖	88
Gradius III and IV	Konami	●●◖	39
Gradius V	Konami	●●●◖	85
Gran Turismo 3: A-spec	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**46**
Grand Prix Challenge	Atari	●●●◖	68
Grand Theft Auto III	**Rockstar**	●●●●●	**52**
Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	**Rockstar**	●●●●●	**87**
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	**Rockstar**	●●●●●	**63**
Grandia II	Ubisoft	●●●◖	53
Grandia Xtreme	Enix	●●●◖	62
Gravity Games Bike: Street, Vert, Dirt	Midway	◖	61
The Great Escape	Gotham Games	●●●◖	72
⚡Gretzky NHL 2005	Sony CEA	●●◖	88
⚡Growlanser Generations	Working Designs	●●●●	88
GTC Africa	Majesco	●●◖	58
Guilty Gear Isuka	Sammy	●●●●	86
Guilty Gear X	Majesco/Sammy	●●●●	51
Guilty Gear X2	Sammy	●●●●	66
Gungrave	Sega	●●●◖	61
Gungrave: Overdose	Mastiff	●●●◖	86
Gungriffon Blaze	Working Designs	●●●◖	39
The Guy Game	Gathering	●	85
Half-Life	**Sierra**	●●●●●	**51**
Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup	**EA Games**	●●●	**75**
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	EA Games	●◖	76
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	EA Games	●●●◖	64
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban	EA Games	●●●●	82
Harvest Moon: Save the Homeland	Natsume	●●●●	51
Haunted Mansion	TDK	●●●	77
Haven: Call of the King	Midway	●●●◖	64
Headhunter	Acclaim	●●●	57
Headhunter: Redemption	Sega	●●●	86
Herdy Gerdy	Eidos	●●●	56
Heroes of Might and Magic	3DO	●●◖	46
Hidden Invasion	Conspiracy	●●●	60
High Heat MLB 2002	3DO	●●●●	44
High Heat MLB 2003	3DO	●●●●◖	55
High Heat MLB 2004	**3DO**	●●●●●	**67**
Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	●●●●◖	81
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	**Eidos**	●●●●◖	**63**
The Hobbit	Vivendi Universal	●●●◖	76
Hot Shots Golf 3	**Sony CEA**	●●●●	**55**
⚡Hot Shots Golf Fore!	Sony CEA	●●●◖	85
Hot Wheels: Velocity X	THQ	●●◖	64
The Hulk	**Vivendi Universal**	●●●●	**70**
Hunter: The Reckoning–Wayward	Interplay	●●◖	72
Hypersonic Xtreme	Majesco	●●◖	67
I-Ninja	Namco	●●●◖	75
Ico	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**50**
The Incredibles	THQ	●●●◖	88
Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	LucasArts	●●●	71
Indy Car Series	Codemasters	●●●	71
Intellivision Lives!	Crave	●●●◖	77
Island Extreme Stunts	EA Games	●●●◖	65
The Italian Job	Eidos	●●	72
Jade Cocoon 2	Ubisoft	●●●◖	53
Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**52**
Jak II	**Sony CEA**	●●●◖	**74**
Jak 3	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	87
James Bond 007: Agent Under Fire	**EA Games**	●●●●	**52**
James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing	EA Games	●●●●◖	79
James Bond 007: NightFire	**Activision**	●●●●◖	**64**
James Cameron's Dark Angel	Sierra	●●	65
Jeopardy!	Atari	●●◖	77
Jeremy McGrath Supercross World	Acclaim	●	53
Jet X20	Sony CEA	●●	63
Jimmy Neutron: Attack of the Twonkies	THQ	●●●	88
Jonny Moseley Mad Trix	3DO	●◖	54
Judge Dredd: Dredd vs. Death	Evolved Games	●●◖	80
The Jungle Book: Rhythm n' Groove	Ubisoft	●●●	69
Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis	Universal Int.	●●●●◖	68
K-1 World Grand Prix	Konami	●●	71
Karaoke Revolution	Konami	●●●●	75
Karaoke Revolution Volume 2	Konami	●●●●◖	83
Karaoke Revolution Volume 3	Konami	●●●●◖	87
Katamari Damacy	Namco	●●●●◖	86
Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer	Activision	●●●◖	61
Kengo: Master of Bushido	Crave	●●●	42
Kessen	EA Games	●●●	39
Kessen II	Koei	●●●	51
kill.switch	**Namco**	●●●●◖	**75**
⚡Killzone	Sony CEA	●●●●	87
Kinetica	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	50
King Arthur	Konami	●	88
King of Fighters 2000/2001	SNK Playmore	●●◖	76
King of Fighters 2002/2003	SNK Playmore	●●●●	88
King of Fighters: Maximum Impact	SNK Playmore	●●●	87
The King of Route 66	Sega	●●●	67
King's Field: The Ancient City	Agetec	●●	55
Kingdom Hearts	**Square EA**	●●●●◖	**61**
Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil	Namco	●●●●◖	47
Knockout Kings 2001	EA Sports	●●●●	42
Knockout Kings 2002	EA Sports	●●●●	55
Kuon	Agetec	●●◖	87
Kya: Dark Lineage	Atari	●●◖	76
La Pucelle: Tactics	Mastiff	●●●●	81
Le Mans 24 Hours	Infogrames	●●◖	48
Legacy of Kain: Defiance	Eidos	●●◖	76
Legaia 2: Duel Saga	Fresh Games	●●●	63
The Legend of Alon D'ar	Ubisoft	●◖	54
Legends of Wrestling	Acclaim	●●◖	53
Legends of Wrestling II	Acclaim	●●●	65
Legion: The Legend of Excalibur	Midway	●●●	59
Lego Racers 2	Lego Media	●●◖	51
Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	87
Lethal Skies	Sammy	●●●	58
Lethal Skies II	Sammy	●●●◖	74
Looney Tunes: Back in Action	EA Games	●	76
The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	Black Label	●●●◖	63

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
⚡The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**75**
The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age	EA Games	●●	88
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	**EA Games**	●●●●◐	**63**
Lowrider	Jaleco	●◐	77
Lupin the 3rd: Treasure of the Sorcerer King	Bandai	●●●◐	78
Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter	Vivendi Universal	●●	71
Mad Maestro!	Eidos/Fresh	●●●	56
Madden NFL 2001	EA Sports	●●●●◐	38
Madden NFL 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◐	48
⚡Madden NFL 2003	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**60**
⚡Madden NFL 2004	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**72**
⚡Madden NFL 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◐	83
Mafia	Gathering	●●●◐	79
Magic Pengel: The Quest for Color	Agetec	●●●●	69
Malice	Mud Duck	●●◐	84
Manhunt	**Rockstar**	●●●◐	**76**
The Mark of Kri	Sony CEA	●●●	59
Marvel vs. Capcom 2	Capcom	●●●●	61
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2	Activision	●●●●	60
Max Payne	**Rockstar**	●●●●	**53**
Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne	Rockstar	●●●◐	77
Maximo: Ghosts to Glory	**Capcom**	●●●◐	**54**
Maximo vs. Army of Zin	Capcom	●●●●	77
McFarlane's Evil Prophecy	Konami	◐	84
MDK2 Armageddon	Interplay	●●●◐	45
Medal of Honor: Frontline	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**58**
⚡Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	**EA Games**	●●●◐	**76**
Mega Man Anniversary Collection	Capcom	●●●◐	83
Mega Man X: Command Mission	Capcom	●●●◐	86
Mega Man X7	Capcom	●●●◐	74
Mega Man X8	Capcom	●●●	88
Men in Black II: Alien Escape	Infogrames	●●◐	60
Metal Arms: Glitch in the System	Vivendi Universal	●●●●	75
Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty	**Konami**	●●●●●	**51**
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	**Konami**	●●●●●	**67**
Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater	**Konami**	●●●●●	**88**
Metropolismania	Natsume	●●●	61
Midnight Club	**Rockstar**	●●●●	**39**
⚡Midnight Club II	**Rockstar**	●●●●●	**67**
Midway Arcade Treasures	Midway	●●●◐	76
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⚡NCAA March Madness 2004	EA Sports	●●●●	76
⚡NCAA March Madness 2005	EA Sports	●●●◐	88
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⚡NFL GameDay 2003	Sony CEA	●●◐	61
⚡NFL GameDay 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	73
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⚡NFL Street	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●◐	**78**
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NHL 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◐	50
NHL 2003	EA Sports	●●●◐	63
⚡NHL 2004	EA Sports	●●●●	73
⚡NHL 2005	EA Sports	●●●◐	85
NHL 2K3	**Sega Sports**	●●●●●	**64**
NHL FaceOff 2001	Sony CEA	●●●◐	43
NHL FaceOff 2003	Sony CEA	●●	64
NHL Hitz 20-02	Midway	●●●●	51
NHL Hitz 20-03	Midway	●●●●◐	62
⚡NHL Hitz Pro	Midway	●●●●	73
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CITY PLANNER

Have you played your way through *The Sims* and *The Urbz* but still haven't gotten your fill of God games? Check out *Metropolismania*, which is a small-scale city-planning game with character and heart. You should be able to find it dirt cheap, too.

READER REVIEWS

SNAKE EATING AND SCENE STEALING

METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

WHAT YOU SAID

When *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* was released, I didn't think any game could top it. Then my long-awaited *Metal Gear Solid 3* came out, and let me say it is un-friggin-believable. It's beyond cinematic; it's thrilling, amazing, mind-blowingly good. I was never before entangled in a game's story like this. I never felt for a videogame character like this. Every emotion is so well done. Every single aspect and detail to every character is so incredible. You'll learn things you never thought you'd find out about *Metal Gear Solid*. Along with the unbelievable story, you'll quench the espionage thirst you've been dying of. Sneaking in the bushes has never been so nerve-racking and so fun at the same time. Tons of camouflage and great weapons also add to the mix. Don't forget all the Easter eggs Hideo Kojima throws in! What is there not to like about it? If you have to get one PS2 game this year, make it *Metal Gear Solid 3*."

[●●●●●]

Steve Burns
fancymints03@msn.com

WHAT WE SAID

"A very good survival-stealth game with a semihokey story; taken as a whole, it's easily one of the best experiences on the PS2."

[●●●●●]

VIEWTIFUL JOE

WHAT YOU SAID

"*Viewtiful Joe* may be the best superhero game ever, but that's about it. Does it have innovation? Not really, no. Although praised for its 2.5D gameplay, this isn't really innovative. *Klonoa* and *Klonoa 2* have been out for far longer with much better gameplay. The visuals, you ask? If you want cartoon-style visuals, just pick up *Sly Cooper* for a much better game. What about audio? Hmm, let's see; every game I have mentioned so far has better audio, even if *Klonoa* is in a language I can't understand. What about the superpowers? Somehow, the ability to slow down time seems overused and not even done too well in this game. How much fun is a superhero who constantly loses his powers temporarily? For me, not very. If there's any hint of anything funny here, *Katamari Damacy* has already topped it. *Viewtiful Joe* is one of the biggest disappointments this year and doesn't deserve my respect. It should have revived the 2D series, but this game put it down the hole even further instead. As is, you can play it, but don't expect much from it."

[●◐○○○]

Carrot Girl
eraserbear88@hotmail.com

WHAT WE SAID

"Cool powers, cool costume, cool gameplay...but parts of the old-school design are too old school and cliché."

[●●●●◐]

BOX SET

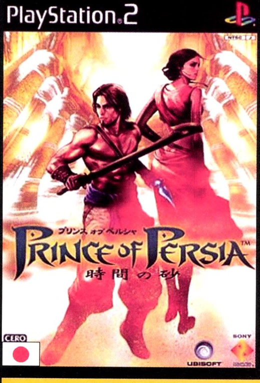
BOX ART AROUND THE WORLD by Jeremy Parish

They say you can't judge a book by its cover. That maxim holds doubly true for games, whose covers often change dramatically from country to country. But even if a game's cover does not perfectly convey its contents, the art can reveal a great deal about the culture to which it's targeted—or about different publishers' preconceptions about those cultures, anyway.

We delved into the PlayStation and PlayStation 2 back catalogs to dig up the most interesting examples of change we could find. Why do some covers remain exactly the same across America, Europe, and Japan, while others change radically? Prepare to be enlightened...and horrified. For additional enlightenment and horrification, go to opmboxart.1up.com.

A MATTER OF BLACK & WHITE

Thoughtful use of color can truly define a game. The greenish hue of *Metal Gear Solid 2* and the ethereal grays of *Ico* give each game its distinct, memorable feel and create for each a game world that can be recognized at a glance. Color use is important for covers, too, and it's interesting to see what different messages a radical change can convey.


PlayStation 2
プリンス オブ ペルシャ
Prince of Persia
時間の砂
CERO
UBISOFT
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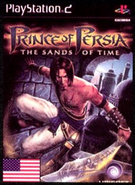
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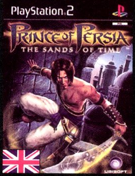
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Prince of Persia
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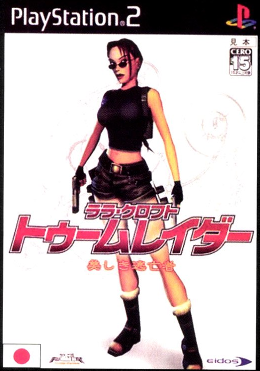
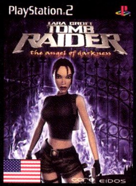
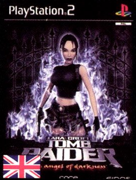

PlayStation 2
見本
CERO 15
ララ・クロフト
トゥームレイダー
美しき逃亡者
eidos


PlayStation 2
Lara Croft Tomb Raider
the angel of darkness
core eidos


PlayStation 2
Lara Croft Tomb Raider
angel of darkness

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

Developer: Ubisoft Montreal **U.S.:** Ubisoft, 11/6/2003 **U.K.:** Ubisoft, 11/21/2003 **Japan:** Ubisoft, 9/2/2004

Those accustomed to *Prince of Persia*'s moody, high-contrast look might be taken aback by the lighter and more monochromatic cover *Sands of Time* sports in Japan. But when judged on its own merits, it's actually a classy reflection of the game's contents: The earth tones reflect the Sands of Time, the background reflects the game's devious environments, and the presence of Princess Farah pays tribute to her vital role in the story, while the Western artwork completely ignores her.

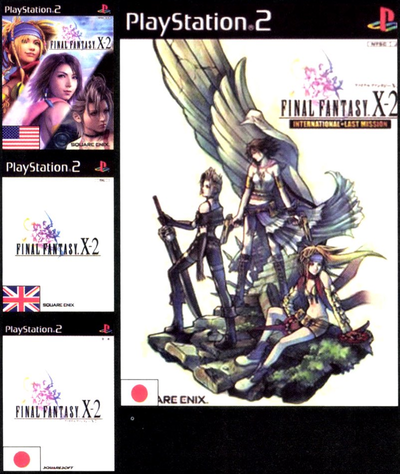
TOMB RAIDER: ANGEL OF DARKNESS

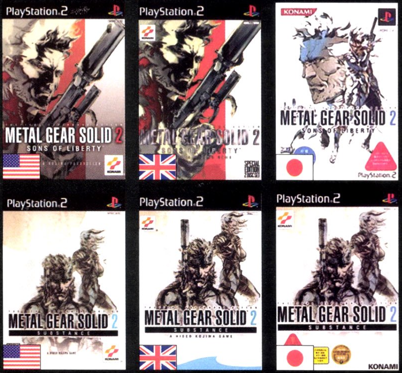
Developer: Core Design **U.S.:** Eidos, 6/20/2003 **U.K.:** Eidos, 7/4/2003 **Japan:** Eidos, 10/23/2004

The Japanese are known for their love of bright, colorful design. It's the country that gave us *Hello Kitty* and *Mr. Driller*, the country whose game publications tend to be candy-colored explosions of art and screens and kanji. But sometimes, you just can't be bright...especially when your game is called *Angel of Darkness*. The U.S. and U.K. releases of the most recent *Tomb Raider* reflect the tone and title of Lara Croft's uneven PS2 debut with a common somber design that varies only in the placement of Lara in relation to the game's logo. The Japanese version, on the other hand, is...very white. But for the iconic symbol in the background, it could easily have been just a random piece of publicity art. While it gets the "Lara Croft" part of the title across in fine form, the "darkness" element is rather lost here.

SPECIAL EDITION MANIA

It's not just Hollywood DVDs that find themselves endlessly rereleased with deluxe cuts and special editions—games are guilty, too. Sometimes you can learn a lot about games by the way publishers approach these deluxe reissues.





FINAL FANTASY X-2

Developer: Square **U.S.:** Square Enix, 11/18/2003 **U.K.:** EA, 2/20/2004 **Japan:** Square, 3/13/2003

FINAL FANTASY X-2 INTERNATIONAL + LAST MISSION

Developer: Square Enix **U.S.:** No Known Release **U.K.:** No Known Release **Japan:** Square Enix, 2/19/2004

American gamers often complain that they never get nice things, and Square Enix (formerly Square) is probably the biggest reason why. The company has a funny (and to some, infuriating) habit of rereleasing Japanese games in slightly upgraded versions after their American release. The trend began with *Final Fantasy VII* way back on the PS1 as a sort of apology to Japanese fans for getting a rushed release: After the significantly improved U.S. version was released, Japan received *FFVII International*, which incorporated the new American cut-scenes and bosses into the game.

Final Fantasy X International, on the other hand, is more than an apology; compared to any previous version of the game, it is significantly enhanced. It includes not only the mostly excellent English voice acting, but also a completely remixed Sphere Grid skill system, insanely powerful versions of the Aeon bosses to fight, and a new ending that teases the arrival of *Final Fantasy X-2*.

Then there's *Kingdom Hearts*, which got a cool new boss fight with Sephiroth for the U.S. version and even more goodies for the International rerelease. But even that pales next to the egregious fanboy torment of *Final Fantasy X-2 International + Last Mission*, the Japan-only remix of *FFX-2* that provides costumes for new character classes, a new dungeon, and tons of additional extra content. We can only imagine what new travesty will be wrought by the inevitable *Final Fantasy XII International* version....

Oh, and as for box art? The Japanese version of *FFX-2* has the traditional *Final Fantasy* logo on a stark white background, a design mirrored by the U.K. release but completely ignored in favor of a decent but less-classy character triptych in America.

METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY

Developer: Konami **U.S.:** Konami, 11/12/2001 **U.K.:** Konami, 3/8/2002 **Japan:** Konami, 11/29/2001

METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE

Developer: Konami **U.S.:** Konami, 3/25/2003 **U.K.:** Konami, 3/28/2003 **Japan:** Konami, 3/20/2003

Here's an interesting study in cultural differences: The Western release of *Metal Gear Solid 2* prominently features *Metal Gear* leading man Solid Snake. That may not seem like a surprise unless you've played the game, in which case you realize that Snake was playable only for about an hour and a half of the adventure. Beyond that, he was merely a supporting character, an enigmatic presence who confused and occasionally confounded the game's true hero, girly-man Raiden. But in Japan, where the game was released several weeks later, Raiden was actually given a more prominent position on the cover than Snake.

Given that Raiden was largely designed for Japanese sensibilities, that's perfectly logical. In a country with a love for long-haired, feminine leading men, the rugged, stubble-chinned, mullet-headed Solid Snake is a tough sell. Hideo Kojima went to incredible lengths to hide Raiden's role in the game until its American release, and the cover art was part of that ploy; given that the cat was out of the bag by the time the game arrived in Japan, he was free to play to that audience without fear of spoiling anything.

When the "director's cut" version (*Substance*) was released, all territories received identical cover art that gave both Snake and Raiden equal billing. Only Japan received the colossal box set, though.

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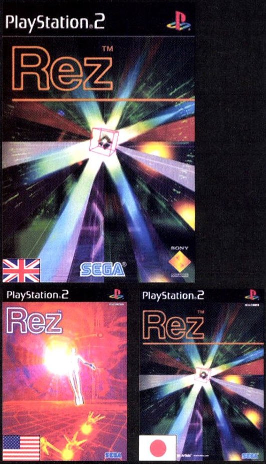
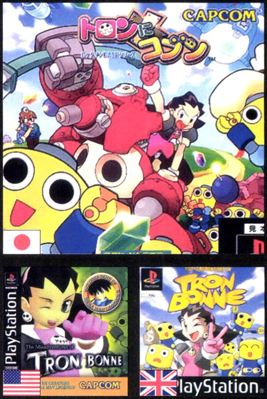
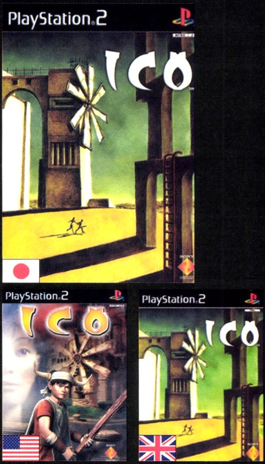
SHORT END OF THE STICK

Unfortunately, while box art tends to degrade less these days when ported from Japan to America, we Yankees still occasionally get the odd raw deal. These three games are vivid examples of how far we have yet to go.







REZ

Developer: United Game Artists **U.S.:** SCEA, 1/7/2002 **U.K.:** SCEE, 2/22/2002
Japan: SCEI, 11/21/2001

United Game Artists' trippy rhythm game is probably best known for coming with the infamous Trance Vibrator, a throbbing Japan-only accessory that gained notoriety when an American website called Game Girl Advance posted a feature discussing its merits as, ah, a way to help ladies enjoy games when their boyfriends were playing. But it's also notorious for Sega's remarkable lack of faith in the game—it cut support for the U.S. version before it even shipped. Perhaps the company would have had more confidence if it had kept the slick, abstract Japanese package art instead of the hopelessly literal, neon-tinted mess that actually made it to the States.

THE MISADVENTURES OF TRON BONNE

Developer: Capcom **U.S.:** Capcom, 4/30/2000 **U.K.:** Eidos, 6/16/2000
Japan: Capcom, 7/22/1999 (Tron Ni Kobun)

The *Mega Man* series never makes the transition to America very gracefully: Capcom's phenomenal artists always create beautifully detailed panoramas for the Japanese boxes. But when they come to America, the cover art is usually reduced to a character or two standing in front of a stark background.

The *Legends* games for PlayStation easily got the short end of the stick. While other *Mega Man* titles retain at least some element of their sharp, hand-drawn original artwork in the States, Capcom USA seemingly felt compelled to provide a visual indication of the games' 3D nature by replacing the Japanese illustrations with poorly prerendered characters. The original cover for the offbeat *Misadventures of Tron Bonne* did a great job of incorporating most of the important game elements—you've got Tron looking bossy while controlling an armored battle suit, the Servbots earnestly doing her criminal bidding, and the hopelessly overwhelmed policewoman doing her insufficient best to put a stop to it all. The U.S. cover tells you only that it's a game about a blocky girl. At least Eidos made an effort in the U.K.; while the art isn't up to Capcom's standards, it does at least do a better job of showing the true stars of the game, the childlike Servbots.

ICO

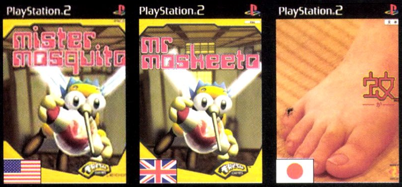
Developer: Insomniac **U.S.:** SCEA, 9/24/2001 **U.K.:** SCEE, 3/22/2002
Japan: SCEI, 12/6/2001

What is *Ico*, you wonder? If the American box art is anything to go by, it's the story of a pug-faced Viking child who is collecting lumber to build a windmill for the ghost of his mother. You wouldn't guess looking at this hopelessly soulless interpretation of the game—young Ico wields a stick as a weapon much of the time, you see—that it's one of the most atmospheric, emotionally involving adventures ever created.

On the other hand, the Japanese art (also carried over flawlessly to the U.K. edition) eschews the grim literalism of the American package in favor of something far more abstract—yet simultaneously more faithful to the game's soul. Drawing upon the haunting works of surrealist Giorgio de Chirico, the original art includes the same elements as the U.S. box: a boy, a girl, a stick, a windmill. But it focuses on stark colors and deep shadows to convey the sense of isolation and grandeur that makes *Ico* so popular among its devotees. More important, it depicts Ico and Yorda clinging together in the face of the daunting shadows and towering ruins, displaying the teamwork that forms the very heart of the game.

THE SAME BUT DIFFERENT

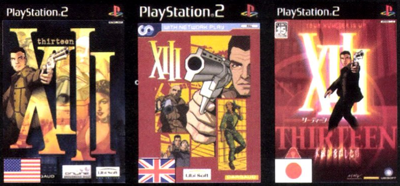
Why does box art change from country to country? It's not always easy to know what was running through a publisher's mind, but it's always fun to speculate.



MR. MOSQUITO

Developer: SCEI **U.S.:** Fresh Games, 3/12/2002 **U.K.:** Eidos, 3/28/2002 (Mr. Moskeeto) **Japan:** SCEI, 6/21/2001 (Ka)

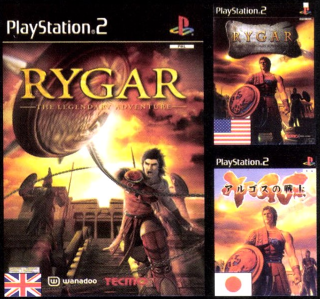
Mr. Mosquito has a simple name in Japan: *Ka*. It's the Japanese word for "mosquito," and the game's box art reflects the straightforward title by presenting a boldly literal interpretation of the gameplay, which puts players in the role of a little flying bloodsucker. Perhaps understandably, this was changed when the game went through the translation wringer: While clever, a picture of a mosquito helping itself to a blood buffet on a girl's foot isn't the kind of thing to appeal to Ma & Pa Midwest out in Yokeltown, USA. For the English translation, Eidos' Fresh Games label chose to play up the playable character, naming him Mr. Mosquito and unquestionably presenting him as the star of the game. Ironically, this more kid-friendly look prominently features blood front and center on the cover—something that is normally frowned upon but which is apparently acceptable in this context.



XIII

Developer: Dargaud **U.S.:** Ubisoft, 11/18/2003 **U.K.:** Ubisoft, 11/28/2003 **Japan:** Ubisoft, 8//5/2004

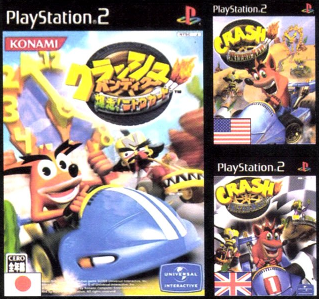
XIII is interesting in that all three of its box art variants make prominent use of the game's stylish, comic-book-inspired artwork, though each in a different way. The European cover does the best job of playing up the funny-pages angle: The artwork is arranged in a boxed montage that resembles comic panels. The U.S. art plays on the motif but incorporates the title of the game into the work for a smart, classy effect. The Japanese art is easily the least appealing, but perhaps that could be chalked up to the amount of space that had to be given over to clarifying the pronunciation of the title—something of a trick, given the language barrier. Interestingly, the U.S. and Japanese covers also helpfully include the title written out as a word; it would seem Ubisoft trusts only Europeans to know how Roman numerals work.



RYGAR: THE LEGENDARY ADVENTURE

Developer: Tecmo **U.S.:** Tecmo, 11/25/2002 **U.K.:** Wanadoo, 5/30/2003 **Japan:** Tecmo, 12/5/2002 (Argos No Senshi)

Interestingly, it's the U.K. cover that strays most from the norm here; the U.S. and Japanese covers are almost identical, with the American variant focusing less tightly on Rygar's face and boldly demonstrating the fact that the hero is wearing a leather skirt. In Europe, publisher Wanadoo clearly wanted no part of this and decided to show the main man in a much more dynamic pose, undermining his dignity while leaving little question that this was a fellow who would have no qualms about tossing a spiky disc-shield in your face if he thought you were up to no good.



CRASH NITRO KART

Developer: Vicarious Visions **U.S.:** Vivendi Universal, 11/11/2003 **U.K.:** Vivendi Universal, 11/28/2003 **Japan:** Vivendi Universal, 7/8/2004

Crash Bandicoot is somewhat infamous for his overseas makeover: Since the very beginning, his Japanese games have given him even bigger bug eyes than he was born with, turning him from a charmingly spin-dizzy goofball to a vaguely psychotic, pop-eyed freak. The unfortunate tradition continued with 2003's *Crash Nitro Kart*, which severely undermines its appeal as a racing game. Frankly, we'd get the hell off the road if we saw that bearing down on us.

THE SPORTS GUY

WINTER DISCONTENT

TODD ZUNIGA
is a former *OPM* staffer turned freelance writer. If you have a question about sports games, want a prediction, or just disagree, mail him at thesportsguy@ziffdavis.com.

It's that time of the year when most of you are cuddled up with your latest sports game. Maybe you scored *Madden* for Christmas, *ESPN NHL 2K5* for Hanukkah, *NBA Live* for Kwanzaa, or *FIFA 2005* for Festivus (for the rest of us). But me, a bona fide sports game addict: I'm bored out of my sports-distracted skull. I've played everything to the max (the exception: with no NHL as of yet, I can't even look at *ESPN Hockey*). *Winning Eleven 8* is two months away, and baseball games won't hit for 90 days.

But instead of complaining (or at least to halt myself from complaining without pause), I've come up with a series of year-in-review Sports Guy Awards, sanctioned by absolutely no one but myself. And the envelope, please....

Best New Innovation: *Madden 2005*'s hit stick. For years, playing defense in *Madden* has been stupidly impossible, yet it was the gaming equivalent of the emperor's new clothes. No one mentioned it! (Not even me.) Finally, this simple and smart use of the right analog stick cleared up the game's biggest (only?) weakness.

Best Story: *ESPN NFL 2K5* sells at $20. After getting slapped around saleswise for years, this desperate and worthy franchise went after EA in the only way it knew how. Now both games are huge sellers, and ESPN has a consumer foothold for next season's kickoff. Nice play.

Best Game You Never Played: *Winning Eleven 7*. You cads! You drips! Why didn't you play this!? It's arguably the best game of the calendar year, and you were too busy poncing around with *FIFA*. If you ask me, this dated version is still better than *FIFA 2005*. Runner-Up: *Cabela's Big Game Hunter 2005*.

Biggest Disappointment: *NCAA Football 2005*. One of my favorite franchises took a year off. Blame the PS2 or blame the idiotic match-up stick, which still confuses me as to what it means, what it does, and why anyone would bother with it. Runner-up: *ESPN NBA 2K5*.

Nice Try Award: *Madden 2005*'s Tony Bruno Show. A good concept; it wasn't the generic commentary that baffled us, rather the fact that Bruno didn't keep warbling on when you whipped around different menus. Bummer.

Sports Game of the Year: *Madden NFL 2005*. Slick hit stick, tightest gameplay ever, and franchise story lines that got me pumped to read that *USA Today* rag. Runner-Up (tie): *Pro Soccer Evolution 4* (Europe), *ESPN NHL 2K5*.

Now onto January's can't-miss contests: Wait, first...I've been using *Madden* as a predictor all season, and it has occurred to me that it stinks! *Madden*'s stumbled to a 1-8 record since I've employed it. One and eight. My mother could predict better than that. In fact, I let her pick the winners this month. January 2 sees the Colts at the Broncos (Mom says, "I don't know, what sport is this? Colts, I guess, 54-35."), along with the Seahawks at the Falcons (she's predicting, "The Fulcrums. Is this football? Is 20-9 an OK score?"). Over in the NBA, two upstarts battle it out on January 23 when the Jazz visit the Sonics, and LeBron's Cavs head to the Garden to tackle the Knicks on January 28. If you've got tickets, invite me! «

> "I'M BORED OUT OF MY SKULL. I'VE PLAYED EVERYTHING TO THE MAX."

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Oni	Rockstar	●◖	43
Onimusha: Warlords	**Capcom**	**●●●●**	**43**
Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny	**Capcom**	**●●●●**	**60**
Onimusha 3: Demon Siege	Capcom	●●●●◖	81
Orphen: Scion of Sorcery	Activision	●●●	39
⚡Outlaw Golf 2	Global Star	●◖	88
Pac-Man Fever	Namco	●●	60
Pac-Man World 2	**Namco**	**●●●●◖**	**54**
PaRappa the Rapper 2	Sony CEA	●●●◖	53
Paris-Dakar Rally	Acclaim	●●	53
Phantom Brave	NIS America	●●●●◖	85
Pirates: The Legend of Black Kat	EA Games	●●●◖	55
Pitfall: The Lost Expedition	Activision	●●	80
The Polar Express	THQ	●●●	88
Pool Paradise	Ignition	●●●◖	83
Portal Runner	3DO	●●	50
Power Drome	Mud Duck	●	84
Power Rangers: Dino Thunder	THQ	●●	88
The Powerpuff Girls: Relish Rampage	Bam	●●	65
Pride FC	THQ	●●●●	65
Primal	Sony CEA	●●●●	68
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time	**Ubisoft**	**●●●●●**	**75**
Prince of Persia: Warrior Within	Ubisoft	●●●●	88
Pro Race Driver	Codemasters	●●●●◖	65
Project Eden	Eidos	●●●◖	52
Pryzm Chapter One: The Dark Unicorn	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	60
Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	●●●●◖	82
P.T.O. IV	Koei	●●●	66
Q-Ball Billiards Master	Take-Two	●●●◖	40
Quake III Revolution	EA Games	●●●●◖	44
R: Racing Evolution	Namco	●●●●	76
R-Type Final	Eidos/Fresh Games	●●●●	78
Rally Fusion: Race of Champions	Activision	●●●	64
Rapala Pro Fishing	Activision	●●◖	85

SEQUEL, PLEASE!
We loved *Ring of Red*, we really did. Its alternate-history-with-mechs story line and innovative strategy gameplay were a breath of fresh air for strategy fans (even if it took too damn long to do anything). Konami, when are you going to give us a sequel?

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Ratchet & Clank	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**63**
Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**75**
⚡**Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal**	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**87**
Rayman 2: Revolution	**Ubisoft**	**●●●●●**	**41**
Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Ubisoft	●●●◖	67
Rayman Arena	Ubisoft	●●●◖	57
RC Revenge Pro	Acclaim	●●◖	41
Ready 2 Rumble Boxing Round 2	Midway	●●●●	40
Real Pool	Infogrames	●●●◖	40
Red Card Soccer 20-03	Midway	●●●	57
Red Dead Revolver	Rockstar	●●●●	82
Red Faction	**THQ**	**●●●●●**	**46**
Red Faction II	THQ	●●●●	63
Reel Fishing III	Natsume	●●●●	72
Reign of Fire	Bam	●●●◖	63
Resident Evil Code: Veronica X	**Capcom**	**●●●●◖**	**48**
Resident Evil: Dead Aim	Capcom	●●●◖	70
Resident Evil Outbreak	Capcom	●●●◖	81
Return to Castle Wolfenstein: OR	Activision	●●●◖	71
Rez	Sega	●●●●◖	53
Ribbit King	Bandai	●●●	82
Ridge Racer V	Namco	●●●●◖	38
Riding Spirits	Bam	●●●◖	61
Ring of Red	Konami	●●●●	43
Rise to Honor	**Sony CEA**	**●●●**	**78**
⚡Risk: Global Domination	Atari	●●●●	73
RLH: Run Like Hell	Interplay	●●●	62
Road Kill	Midway	●●●●	74
Road Trip	Conspiracy	●●●●	61
Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown	Capcom	●●◖	74
Robotech: Invasion	Global Star	●●●	86
Rocky	Ubisoft	●●●●	64
Rocky Legends	Ubisoft	●●◖	87
Robot Alchemic Drive	Enix	●●●●	63

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Robotech: Battlecry	TDK	●●●◖	62
Rogue Ops	Kemco	●●◖	75
Romance of the Three Kingdoms VII	Koei	●●◖	60
Romance of the Three Kingdoms VIII	Koei	●●●	73
RPG Maker 2	Agetec	●●●◖	74
RTX Red Rock	LucasArts	●●	71
Rugby	EA Sports	●●●◖	48
Rugby 2004	EA Sports	●●●	73
Rumble Racing	EA Games	●●●●◖	45
Rumble Roses	Konami	●●●	88
Rune: Viking Warlord	Take-Two	●●◖	48
Rygar: The Legendary Adventure	Tecmo	●●●●◖	64
Salt Lake 2002	Eidos	●●◖	55
Samurai Jack: The Shadow of Aku	Sega	●●●●	80
Samurai Warriors	Koei/EA	●●●●	81
Samurai Warriors: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●	88
Saturday Night Speedway	Atari	●●◖	81
Savage Skies	Bam	●●●	56
Scaler	Global Star	●●●●	88
Scooby-Doo! Mystery Mayhem	THQ	●●●	81
Scooby-Doo! Night of 100 Frights	**THQ**	**●●●**	**58**
The Scorpion King: Rise of the Akkadian	Universal	●●	62
SD Gundam Force: Showdown!	Bandai	●●●◖	88
Second Sight	Codemasters	●●●●	86
Secret Weapons Over Normandy	LucasArts	●●●●	75
Seek and Destroy	Conspiracy	●●●◖	66
Sega Bass Fishing Duel	Sega	●●●	62
Sega Soccer Slam	Sega Sports	●●	62
Sega Sports Tennis	Sega Sports	●●●●◖	60
Sega Superstars	Sega	●●●●	88
⚡Serious Sam: Next Encounter	Global Star	●●●◖	81
Seven Samurai 20XX	Sammy	●●	80
Shadow Hearts	Midway	●●●●	52
Shadow Hearts: Covenant	Midway	●●●●	86

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Shadow of Destiny	Konami	●●●◖	43
Shadow Man: 2econd Coming	Acclaim	●●	57
Shark Tale	Activision	●●◖	88
Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder	Activision	●●◖	52
ShellShock: Nam '67	Eidos	●●	85
Shifters	3DO	●	58
Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne	Atlus	●●●●◖	86
Shinobi	Sega	●●●◖	63
Showdown: Legends of Wrestling	Acclaim	●◖	83
Shox	EA Sports Big	●●●◖	63
Shrek 2	Activision	●●●◖	82
Shrek Super Party	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	64
Siren	Sony CEA	●●●	81
Silent Hill 2	**Konami**	**●●●●◖**	**50**
Silent Hill 3	Konami	●●●●◖	71
Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami	●●●●◖	85
Silent Line: Armored Core	Agetec	●●●◖	70
Silent Scope	Konami	●●●	39
Silent Scope 2	Konami	●●●◖	49
Silent Scope 3	Konami	●●●◖	62
Silpheed: The Lost Planet	Working Designs	●●●◖	40
The Simpsons: Hit & Run	Vivendi Universal	●●●●	72
The Simpsons: Road Rage	**EA Games**	**●●●**	**52**
The Simpsons Skateboarding	EA Games	●◖	64
The Sims	EA Games	●●●●	65
⚡The Sims: Bustin' Out	EA Games	●●●●◖	76
Sitting Ducks	Hip Interactive	●●●	88
Sky Gunner	Atlus	●●●◖	58
Sky Odyssey	Activision	●●●	40
Sled Storm	EA Sports Big	●●●◖	55
Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**62**
Sly 2: Band of Thieves	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**86**
Smash Cars	Metro3D	●●●◖	71
Smash Court Tennis: Pro Tournament	Namco	●●●◖	56
Smash Court Tennis: Pro Tournament 2	Namco	●●●●	82
Smuggler's Run	**Rockstar**	**●●●●◖**	**39**
Smuggler's Run 2: Hostile Territory	Rockstar	●●●●◖	52
Soccer America: International Cup	Hot-B	●●	48
Soccer Mania	EA/Lego	●●●◖	59
⚡SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**60**
⚡SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**75**
Soldier of Fortune	Majesco	●●●	52
Sonic Heroes	Sega	●●	77
Sonic Mega Collection	Sega	●●●	88
Soul Calibur II	**Namco**	**●●●●●**	**72**
Soul Reaver 2	Eidos	●●●	52
Space Channel 5 Special Edition	Sega	●●●◖	75
Space Race	Infogrames	●●◖	59
Spawn Armageddon	Namco	●◖	76
Speed Kings	Acclaim	●●●●	70
Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy	THQ	●●●◖	75
Spider-Man	**Activision**	**●●●●◖**	**57**
Spider-Man 2	Activision	●●●◖	84
Splashdown	Infogrames	●●●●	52
Splashdown: Rides Gone Wild	**THQ**	**●●●●●**	**72**
SpongeBob SquarePants: Battle for Bikini Bottom	THQ	●●●●◖	75
SpongeBob SquarePants: The Movie	THQ	●●●●◖	87
Spy Fiction	Sammy	●●	85
SpyHunter	**Midway**	**●●●●◖**	**50**
SpyHunter 2	Midway	●●●	76
Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly	**Vivendi Universal**	**●●●**	**64**
Spyro: A Hero's Tail	Vivendi Universal	●●	87
⚡SRS: Street Racing Syndicate	Namco	●●●	64
SSX	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●●**	**38**
SSX Tricky	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●●**	**52**
⚡SSX 3	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●●**	**74**
Star Ocean: Till the End of Time	Square Enix	●●●●	84
Star Trek: Shattered Universe	TDK	●●	75
Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force	Majesco	●●◖	53
Star Wars Battlefront	LucasArts	●●●●◖	86
Star Wars Bounty Hunter	**LucasArts**	**●●●**	**64**
Star Wars: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	●●●	65
Star Wars Super Bombad Racing	LucasArts	●●	45
Star Wars Jedi Starfighter	LucasArts	●●●◖	56
Star Wars Racer Revenge	LucasArts	●●●●◖	55
Star Wars Starfighter	**LucasArts**	**●●●●◖**	**43**
Starsky & Hutch	Gotham Games	●●	74
State of Emergency	**Rockstar**	**●●●**	**55**

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Stitch: Experiment 626	Sony CEA	●●◖	59
Street Fighter Anniversary Collection	Capcom	●●●●	84
Street Fighter EX 3	Capcom	●●●◖	39
Street Hoops	**Activision**	**●●●◖**	**60**
Stretch Panic	Conspiracy	●●●◖	47
Strike Force Bowling	Crave	●◖	82
Stuntman	**Infogrames/Atari**	**●●●**	**59**
Sub Rebellion	Metro3D	●●●●	62
The Suffering	Midway	●●●	80
Suikoden III	Konami	●●●	63
Summer Heat Beach Volleyball	Acclaim	●●●◖	72
Summoner	THQ	●●●	39
Summoner 2	THQ	●●●◖	62
Sunny Garcia Surfing	Ubisoft	●●●◖	51
Super Bust-A-Move	Acclaim	●●●	41
Super Bust-A-Move 2	Ubisoft	●●●◖	63
Super Trucks Racing	XS Games	●◖	76
Supercar Street Challenge	Activision	●●◖	52
Superman: Shadow of Apokolips	Atari	●●●◖	63
Surfing H30	Rockstar	●●	40
SWAT: Global Strike Team	Sierra	●●●	74
Swing Away Golf	EA Games	●●●	38
⚡Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain	Sony CEA	●●●	81
Taiko: Drum Master	Namco	●●●●	87
Tak and the Power of Juju	**THQ**	**●●●◖**	**75**
Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams	THQ	●●●◖	88
Tarzan: Untamed	Ubisoft	●●●◖	52
Taz: Wanted	Infogrames	●●●◖	60
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Konami	●●◖	75
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	●	86
Tekken 4	**Namco**	**●●●◖**	**61**
Tekken Tag Tournament	**Namco**	**●●●●◖**	**39**
Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	Activision	●●●	67
The Terminator: Dawn of Fate	Atari	●●◖	63
Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines	Atari	●◖	77
Terminator 3: The Redemption	Atari	●●●◖	86
Test Drive	**Infogrames**	**●●●◖**	**58**
Test Drive Off-Road: Wide Open	Infogrames	●●●	48
Test Drive: Eve of Destruction	Atari	●●●●	85
Tetris Worlds	THQ	●●	57
Theme Park Roller Coaster	EA Games	●●●●	41
The Thing	Universal	●●●	62
Thunderstrike: Operation Phoenix	Eidos	●◖	52
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001	EA Sports	●●●	44
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2002	EA Sports	●●●●	55
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003	EA Sports	●●●●◖	63
⚡Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**73**
⚡Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	86
Time Crisis 2	Namco	●●●●	49
Time Crisis 3	Namco	●●●●◖	74
Time Crisis: Crisis Zone	Namco	●●●◖	86
TimeSplitters	**Eidos**	**●●●●●**	**39**
TimeSplitters 2	**Eidos**	**●●●●●**	**63**
TOCA Race Driver 2	Codemasters	●●●●	86
Tokyo Xtreme Racer 3	Crave	●●	76
Tokyo Xtreme Racer Zero	Crave	●●◖	45
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubisoft	●●●◖	65
⚡Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm	**Ubisoft**	**●●●◖**	**78**
⚡Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3	Ubisoft	●●●●	80
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubisoft	●●●●◖	68
⚡Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	**Ubisoft**	**●●●●●**	**82**
Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness	**Eidos**	**●●**	**72**
⚡Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	**Activision**	**●●●●●**	**51**
⚡Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	**Activision**	**●●●●●**	**63**
⚡Tony Hawk's Underground	**Activision**	**●●●●●**	**76**
⚡Tony Hawk's Underground 2	Activision	●●●●◖	87
Top Angler	Xicat	●●●◖	57
Top Gear Dare Devil	Kemco	●●●◖	41
Top Gun: Combat Zones	Titus	●●●	50
Total Immersion Racing	Empire	●	66
Transformers	Atari	●●●◖	81
Transworld Surf	Infogrames	●●●◖	57
⚡Tribes: Aerial Assault	Sierra	●●●◖	62
Triple Play 2002	EA Sports	●●	55
Triple Play Baseball	EA Sports	●●	45
⚡Trivial Pursuit: Unhinged	Atari	●●	81
True Crime: Streets of L.A.	**Activision**	**●●**	**76**
Tsugunai: Atonement	Atlus	●●●	53

VIRTUA INSANITY

In one of those quirks of reviewing, Sega followed up *VF4* a year and a half later with *VF4: Evolution*, which included all the content of *VF4* and a significant amount more, for half the price. So if you see both games at the store, remember: *Evo* is the way to go.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Turok: Evolution	Acclaim	●◖	62
Twisted Metal: Black	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**47**
⚡Twisted Metal: Black Online	Sony CEA	●●●●	61
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger	EA Games	●●●	62
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger 2: Bush Rescue	EA Games	●●●●	88
UEFA Euro 2004	EA Sports	●●●●◖	82
UFC Throwdown	Crave	●●●◖	58
UFC Sudden Impact	Crave	●●●◖	82
Under the Skin	Capcom	●●●◖	86
Unison	Tecmo	●●●◖	44
Unlimited Saga	Square Enix	●●	70
Unreal Tournament	Infogrames	●●◖	40
The Urbz: Sims in the City	EA Games	●●●◖	88
V-Rally 3	Infogrames	●●●●◖	64
Vampire Night	Namco	●●◖	52
Van Helsing	Vivendi Universal	●●●◖	82
Vexx	Acclaim	●●	67
Victorious Boxers	Empire	●●●◖	51
⚡Vietcong: Purple Haze	Global Star	●◖	88
Viewtiful Joe	Capcom	●●●●◖	85
Viewtiful Joe 2	Capcom	●●●●	88
Virtua Fighter 4	**Sega**	**●●●●●**	**55**
Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution	**Sega**	**●●●●●**	**72**
Virtual on Marz	Sega	●●	76
Wakeboarding Unleashed	Activision	●●●●◖	70
Wallace & Gromit in Project Zoo	Bam	●●●	74
War Jetz	3DO	●●◖	48
War of the Monsters	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**64**
⚡Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior	THQ	●●◖	74
Warriors of Might & Magic	3DO	●●◖	44
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JIN
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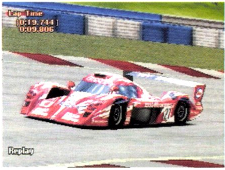
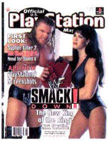


REWIND

FIVE YEARS AGO IN OPM


Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine
First Look
Syphon Filter 2
Need for Speed V
All New PlayStation2 Screenshots
SmackDown!
The New King of the Ring!

LOOK, A BANDWAGON!

That whole pro wrestling thing was getting more popular than ever back in February of 2000, and seeing as how *SmackDown!* was looking to be one of the better wrestling games on PS1, we went right ahead and put it on the cover—complete with Chyna and Triple H fighting over a box of chocolates for that subtle Valentine's Day theme.

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

Meanwhile, in the world beyond games:

Hillary Clinton was launching her Senate campaign; Steve Forbes was dropping out of the U.S. presidential race; Wall Street was starting to take a few cautious steps away from dot-com companies; Charles Schulz was running his final *Peanuts* strip; gasoline prices were averaging $1.41 a gallon; and *Cats* was taking its final curtain call on Broadway. Where were you?

THE BOLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL

THQ was promising big things with *WWF SmackDown!*, and to be fair, it delivered most of the goods. This six-page feature looked into the phenomenon of wrestling, the generally sorry state of wrestling on PS1, and the promise of *SmackDown!*. As it turned out, the game wasn't quite all it was cracked up to be, mainly due to a story mode that was drastically scaled back from the initial concept. A game that promised more than it could deliver—the more things change, the more they stay the same.

STILL MORE PS2 LOVE

Scant months away from the PS2's release in Japan, the game-info trickle had turned into a river. Most of the games covered this month—including *Evergrace*, *Eternal Ring*, *Onimusha*, and *Kessen*—actually made it to release, which was a first for us. Of course, we also mentioned such instant classics as *American Arcade*, *Kikou Seiki G-Breaker*, and a Navy SEALs game from...Codemasters?

REVIEWS HIGHLIGHTS

It should come as no surprise that *Gran Turismo 2* was the highest-rated game of February 2000, with a full five-disc score. Perhaps more surprising to modern readers will be the, er, generous four-disc rating for *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation*. Guess Lara's charm hadn't quite worn off yet.

REVIEWS LOWLIGHTS

Remember that classic side-scrolling platformer *Monkey Magic*? You don't? Neither do we. But apparently we gave it a single disc, making it the lowest-rated game of February 2000. Runners-up were *Supercross 2000*, *South Park Rally*, and *The Dukes of Hazzard*, all coming in at a disc and a half each.

DEMO MADNESS

Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation may have been the biggest game on the disc this month, but our scrappy-underdog-with-a-heart-of-gold award goes to *Tomba! 2: The Evil Swine Return*. This vastly underrated hybrid RPG/platformer series is endlessly charming and wacky as hell. Come to think of it, we want a sequel, dammit!

CHART TOPPERS

A new *Resident Evil* game debuting atop the sales charts? Is this crazy town? No, *Nemesis* at No. 1 didn't surprise us either, nor did *Crash Team Racing*'s debut at No. 3 or *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* hanging on at No. 4. *NBA Live 2000* at No. 2 and *Knockout Kings 2000* at No. 5, though—we were kinda puzzled about that. «

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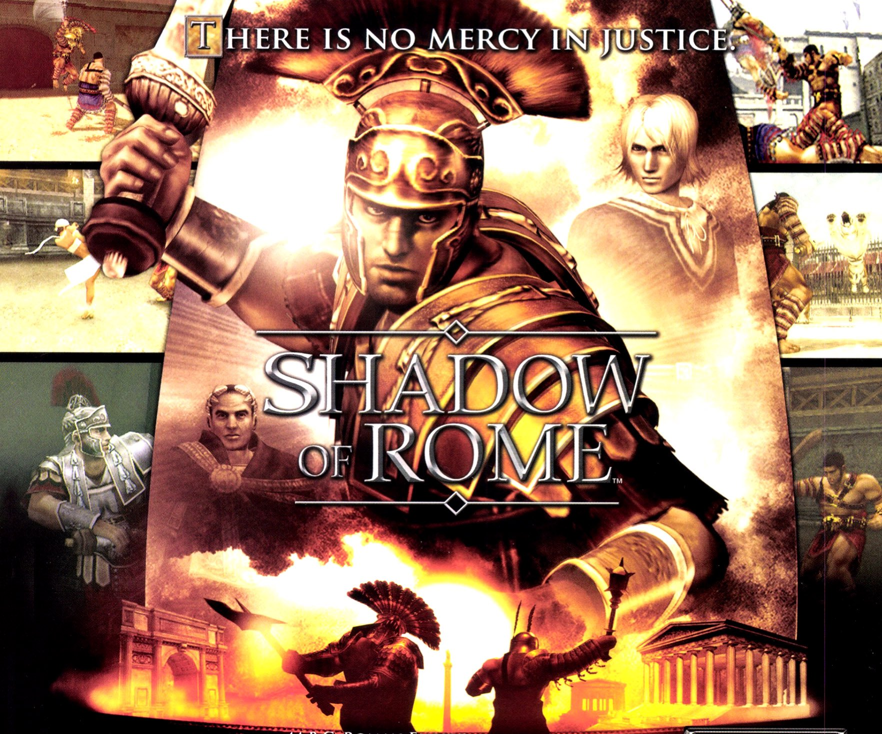
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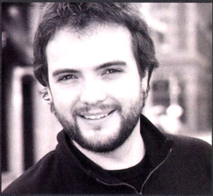
CHALLENGE EVERYWHERE

THE PSP IS ALMOST HERE



On January 5, Sony Computer Entertainment will finally announce its U.S. strategy for the PSP at a lavish event before CES in Las Vegas. Check www.1UP.com for the specifics, but right now I think the safe money is on the system launching here on March 22 for a price of $199. One thing I do know for sure is that the important things, the games, are going to be significantly more impressive than what we saw in Japan. We're already aware of more than 20 titles likely to hit around the launch date, and we have an exclusive look at Electronic Arts' six titles on page 58. At first glance, you'd be forgiven for some cynicism at EA's lineup, but believe me when I say that these titles represent an important shift in game design philosophy. There's a renaissance going on in game design right now, and the PSP is seemingly at the heart of it. Games are becoming all about the important stuff again. Fun is at the heart of everything we've seen on the system so far, and games like *Need for Speed Underground Rivals* show that you don't need story when you've got a fun game to pass around. **«** *John Davison*

THE OPM FAMILY

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DANA JONGEWAARD

is busy mourning the loss of her friends from *XBN* and *GMR*, which includes three excellent women (of which there are way too few in this industry). Everyone, and particularly Caroline, Cindy, and Carrie—you will be very sorely missed.

JOE RYBICKI

would like to pour out a dram of Macallan's Cask Strength single-malt scotch for his homies on *GMR* and *XBN*, two fine magazines that closed this month to the eternal detriment of all right-thinking videogame fans everywhere. Unfortunately, he drank it all.

THIERRY NGUYEN

has played too much *Shadow of Rome*. He's demanding to be addressed as "Most Exalted Scooterus Gluteus Maximus Rex" and roams the halls in search of swordplay, meats, and cheeses. He also mistakes printers for "elephantine beasts from Carthage" and has broken three already.

GIANCARLO VARANINI

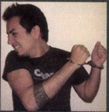
is getting all excited about the PSP after seeing EA's lineup. In fact, he's so excited about the PSP that he would fight an army of angry tutu-wearing polar bears riding motorcycles on top of elephants that are juggling chickens just to get one.

LOGAN PARR

did not get the chance to go home to his native New Zealand this holiday season and enjoy hanging out on the beach having a good ol' Barbie (no shrimp, please...). Luckily, a care package did arrive with Marmite, L&P, and chicken-flavored potato chips, so he is still a happy camper.

RYAN VULK

is extremely disappointed about the lack of love for *FFXI* from the *OPM* crew. You will find out about this treachery later in this mag. He guesses for the upcoming holiday celebrations that they shouldn't be surprised to get a pile of chocobo goodness in their stockings.



ALEJANDRO CHAVETTA

is missing. Recent reports confirmed of his capture by the Czech Blue Army Faction. He is said to be detained in Fort Prenestino for attempting to sell purses made from his skin. This is the second time he has tried to sell his unbreakable dermis overseas.

TODD ZUNIGA

is spending the entire month playing *Winning Eleven 8* and studiously watching every one of top geezer/Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho's sideline behaviors. Also, he's discussing EA's aggressive plans to buy rights to his full name, which, laugh it up, starts with "Adrian."

ZOE FLOWER

is a columnist and award-winning dodgeball player with a penchant for 8-inch rubber balls. When she is not intensively training for competition, she can be found relaxing with *Karaoke Revolution 3*, a game in which she is capable of singing in duet mode all by herself.

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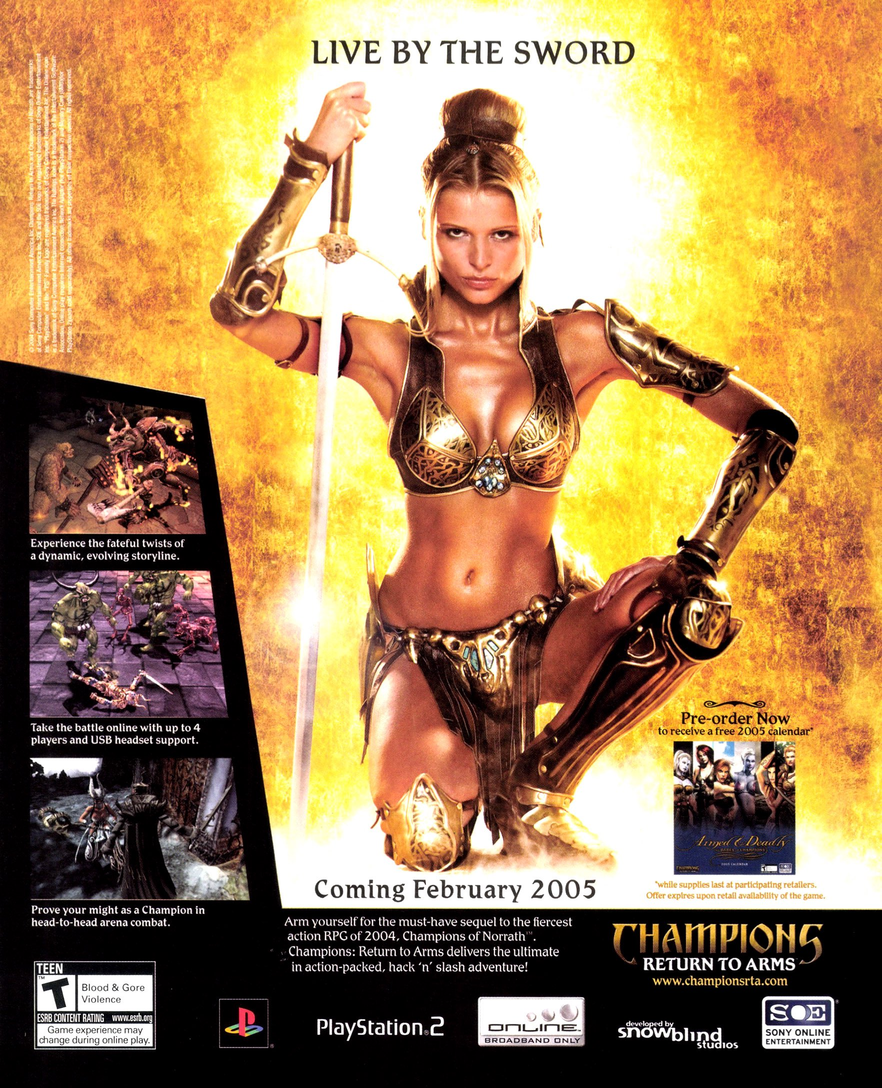

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ON THE DVD

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

Alas, the holiday-driven nature of this industry means that we're starting our slow period right about...now. Before you kids write to us about putting more demos in the mag, try writing to Old Man Santa about making more demos for us to use first!

OFFICIAL U.S.
PlayStation

PLAY IT

MORE SOCOM II FUN FOR YOU!

Another *SOCOM II* map for you, and another set of strategies for said map on page 102! Huzzah!

KATAMARI DAMACY

You know how everyone who isn't you keeps on talking about "that ball rolling game"? This is your chance to stop being uninformed and get on the ball!

MERCENARIES

Read the review on page 78, then come experience this *GTA: North Korea* yourself. Alas, no chance to shoot the Chairman himself here.

SLY 2

Did you see *Ocean's Twelve* and say, "This would be better if the whole crew was a bunch of animals!" Well, this demo is as close as you can get.

VIRTUA QUEST

This almost looks like "*Virtua Fighter* for babies," but it's not! Experience all the loosely-tied-to-*Virtua Fighter* action for yourself here!

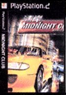
SEGA SUPERSTARS

If you ever thought about non-erotic ways to use your EyeToy, here are Sega's suggestions: help Sonic run, fight *Virtua Fighter* dudes, or slap zombies.

FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST

This game doesn't teach you about changing lead into gold, so no dreams of reenacting the Gilded Age, just good old-fashioned anime-style action.

WATCH IT

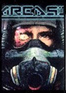


MIDNIGHT CLUB 3

Unless you too have a bank vault where you can literally swim in money, you can't afford most of these cars, so just watch them instead.

TEKKEN 5

You know that old guy, Heihachi, who you recently saw in *Soul Calibur II*? He's been ended! How? Who? Why? This video answers nothing.



AREA 51

Not only do you get some sort of infomercial about the game, but you get a slick trailer voiced by none other than Fox Mulder! He's wearing a rad T-shirt, too!

VIEWTIFUL JOE 2

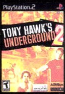
If *Behind the Music* covered 2D cel-shaded action games based on comic books and movies, then it might resemble something like this video.

PLUS...

A profile on everyone's favorite Cool Move duder, Saul Villegas!

S.L.A.I.

What does this mean? Savagely Litigious Aardvarks Incorporated? Well, no, but to see what it means, watch this video. Then nod to yourself.



THUG 2

This ain't just another ordinary sell video. It's one featuring Tony Hawk! He tells you all about the life of digital thuggery and pranksterism! Go for it!

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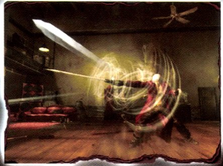
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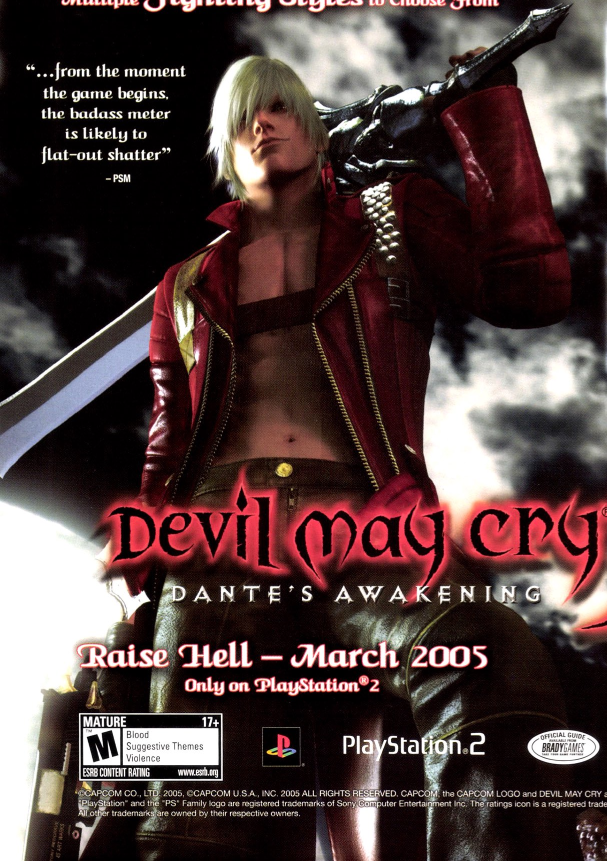

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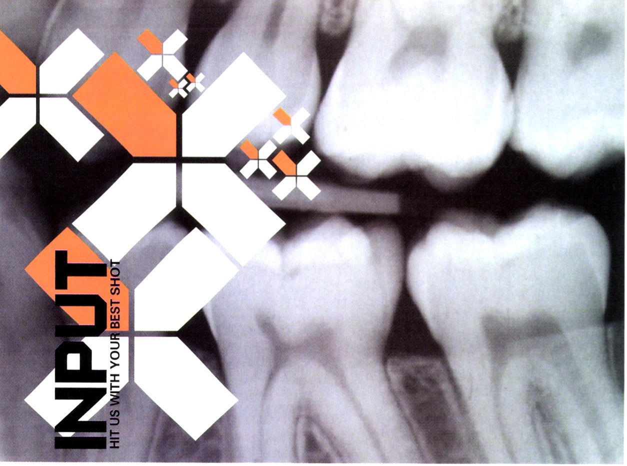
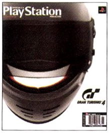


INPUT

HIT US WITH YOUR BEST SHOT



LETTER OF THE MONTH

I've always been a big gamer, and while I too want the perfect game and notice the problems the gaming industry faces today, I feel no one really focuses on the true problem that hurts the gaming industry: the safety seal. Now, supposedly its purpose is to prevent the stealing of videogames or something, but really, it's getting too crazy. First you think it's just a wrapping on the outside, so you unwrap it and try to open it—just to find that it has a sticker on top keeping it shut, and the sticker is harder to remove than a nail completely embedded in a piece of wood. THEN you find that they have added a sticker to the side of the game case, and then they went and added one to the bottom of the case. Any problem companies have with selling games is all a result of their safety plans. Several times I have thought about buying a videogame but decided not to so I could avoid those stickers. I'm not saying that games should be on the shelf for everyone's taking, but three stickers and a wrapper is major overkill. Just cool it down, please.

Kyle Meyerhoff
via e-mail

It's because the American Dental Association has a secret alliance with game companies—more stickers means more chances for you to wreck your teeth trying to rip them open.

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THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

My memory cards were suddenly erased. How, you may ask? Well, I received the PlayStation Underground Holiday Demo Disc and would later find out that this was the cause. All because *Viewtiful Joe 2* had a glitch, 38 different game saves are gone, and all Sony has to say is "sorry." Not even a different free demo disc or anything. So I will never trust these demo discs again, and I now hate *Viewtiful Joe*. To show my anger, I shot the disc and will be blowing it up with fireworks and later burning the tiny remains. Merry Christmas!

Matt Nowatzke
via e-mail

Yes, folks, in case you missed it (and if you did, be happy), there was a seriously screwed-up *Viewtiful Joe 2* demo on a recent holiday demo disc that Sony mailed out to PlayStation Underground members. This demo, when played, completely wipes any memory card in the system. (It may even affect HDD units, though this is still unconfirmed—hey, do *you* want to try it? Didn't think so.) Sony scrambled to minimize the damage by recalling mailed demos and sending out e-mails to PSU members, but for many it was too little, too late.

The good news is that Sony does want to make it right. So if you lost memory card saves, call Sony before January 31, 2005, at 1-800-345-SONY. Have your PS2's serial number handy. They'll ask you to send in the offending disc and will replace it with *Athens 2004, ATV Offroad Fury 3, Gran Turismo 3 A-spec, Hot Shots Golf Fore!, MLB 2004, Parappa the Rapper 2, Sly 2: Band of Thieves,* or *Wild Arms 3*. Small consolation for those of you who were one mission away from completing *San Andreas*, we know, but at least it's something. Sure, you can get mad, but you could also look on the bright side.

After the initial feeling of shock, followed by anger, and then sadness, I felt kinda...happy. I

GAMERS ARE TALKING ABOUT

STRAIGHT FROM THE OPM MESSAGE BOARDS

FALL OF THE KASAI

When Sony announced that it was removing the online component from *yet another* first-party game, the public was outraged (OK, maybe more like "mildly disinterested"). "That sucks," said **magicthighs**. "I was really looking forward to playing that online. I wish they would let two human players play co-op from the same console, at least."

"It's so sad that offline co-op had to go with it," said **xxxGrimeyxxx**. "I was never looking forward to *Kasai* being online, but I really wanted it to be co-op. You would think it'd be easier to let a second player control the second character rather than have an A.I routine running it. Oh well, it's not as much of a must-buy any longer for me."

Oralb808 took a more stoic approach: "I didn't want to co-op anyway. I wanna do all the killing myself, dig?"

GAMING ON THE CHEAP

Looking for some budget titles to pad out your holiday rake? **OhJTBehaaave** has some suggestions for you: "*World Championship Poker* is done so well and captures the essence of poker with the Texas Hold 'Em stuff. The game is as smart as can be and an absolute bargain that ranks up there with the $19.99 Sega sports games. The other game is called *Pinball Hall of Fame*. I've played a few of the pinball games out on different systems, and this one plays the best...and it's only $15!"

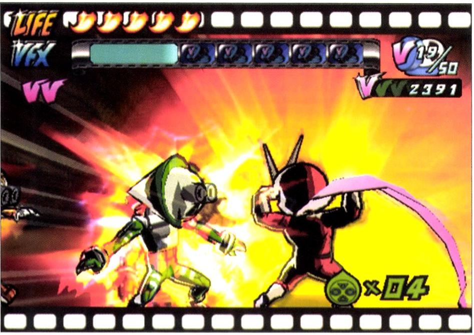
Of course, everyone else chimed in with their own budget suggestions. "For $5 at GameStop, you owe it to yourself to get *Fantavision*," advised **TheSoulTakerX**. "It's an awesome party game involving fireworks, it looks great, and it's really challenging—one of the few good puzzle-type games on the PS2."

KillaGorilla waved the torch for *Katamari Damacy*, saying, "It's the king of all cheap games. You just can't beat the deal. It was the best $20 I have spent on a videogame, ever."

Irishmalt reported, "We got *Kill.switch* fairly recently for $10. That game was tons of fun."

Rashanii gave props to the indie developers, saying, "*Alien Hominid* only costs 30 bucks, but it is a great game."

"This year has seen some pretty good games come out that have only been $20," concluded newcomer **bizsumpark182**. "And you know this has to be having an effect on the industry. I just hope that in the future, game developers will realize that you can make a quality $20 or $30 game."



now have a reason to replay all of my games. It's almost like my games are all new, only I'm an expert at them all. My save files will be way better then before! Not only that, it's the holiday season and a ton of new games are coming out; I can spend my money on a new game instead of a new memory card. I have plenty of save space now! Sure, I lost a lot, but it's nothing I can't do again. Looks like 2005 is going to be a very busy year!
Jenna Villegas
via e-mail

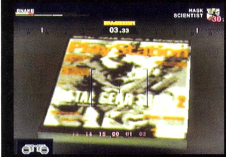
Actually, that's sort of unnaturally upbeat, and frankly, we're a bit scared. On related topics:

I just got the January 2005 *OPM* and the demo disc had no sleeve for protection. That could pose a scratching problem on delivery to customers and a lot of complaints. It's a good thing that AOL disc had a metal holder because I can put the disk in there.
Scott Sarah
via e-mail

Last month you promised a demo of *Viewtiful Joe 2*. Where is it?
MAD330Q@aol.com

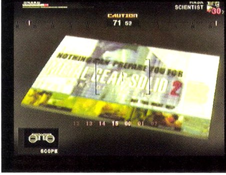
We *were* supposed to have that same deadly *Viewtiful Joe 2* demo, but discovered shortly after the issue went to print how dangerous it was. As a result, we got to shout "STOP THE PRESSES!" and hit the big red button (finally!), pulling all the offending discs out of the issues and replacing them with kinder, *VJ2* free versions. As a result, 1) the discs were floating free rather than in their usual spot in the middle of the mag, and 2) the issues got sent out a bit later than they should have. Sorry about that.

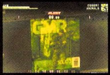
1960s RUSSIAN SCIENTISTS LOVE OPM

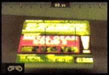


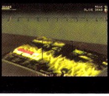
I was playing through *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater* when I came across the coolest thing. On the desk in the basement of the Graniny Gorki lab was a copy of *OPM*!
Raistar Nettlethorn
via e-mail

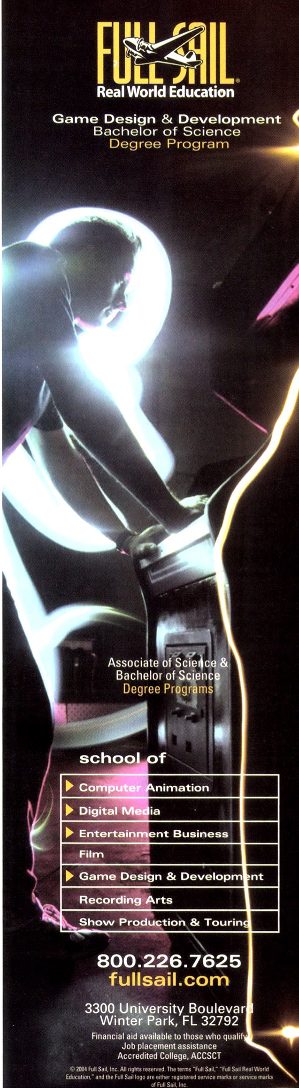
Hey, nice catch. We were wondering why Konami wanted scans of our Issue #51 cover and *MGS2* spread. Turns out they gave props to just about every game mag in the U.S., including our sister publications *Electronic Gaming Monthly* and *GMR*. Now if we could just figure out how those scientists were able to get copies of our magazines before any of us were born.







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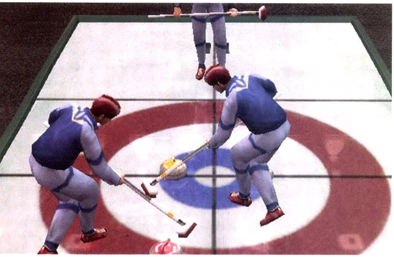

CABLE ENVY

I think there are a HUGE number of gamers out there who are playing their games with standard composite A/V cables. I was never one to use S-video, but I recently jumped up to component cables. Holy mother of my videogame TV! It's insane how much clearer colors are—even on my TV, a 480i non-HDTV! I can only imagine how insanely colorful games would look on a true HDTV at 480/720/1080p. Insane. I am gonna replay a lot of my games now with this enhanced clarity; it's like they are all-new games! If you haven't seen the difference, I highly recommend the upgrade. The extra cost for these premium cables is worth every penny!

Scott Whitmore
via e-mail

Quite true; even S-video cables make a pretty serious difference. If you've got a not-exactly-new television with just the S-video input, you'd still be doing your eyes a favor by stepping up to S-video.

CURL, YOU KNOW IT'S TRUE

I don't know if it's a joke or not, but I saw in your December issue that you asked if there were any curling fans. I'm a competitive curler here in Canada, and I would love to see a better curling game. I bought that Winter Olympics PS2 game simply for that reason, and I must admit that the curling game was...well....crap. So I don't know if there are any in the works, but I would love to see one that is just a curling game. I don't know how much of a market there would be in the U.S., but I know it would sell well up here, and with the Japanese becoming increasingly more interested and competitive in curling, it might do well there as well.

Bryan "MOOKIE" Blaylock
via e-mail

I used to think curling was dumb. I used to think, "That's the most ridiculous sport I've ever seen!" I used to make fun of the game while I was on the air on an Internet radio station. Then, some of my Canadian listeners told me, "Don't make fun until you've tried it." I agreed, and ventured into the woods of Connecticut to try it out. That was three years ago. Now I have my own curling broom, my own curling shoes, and, yes, my own curling pants. Curling is like a cult. Once you're hooked, you want to spread the word to the masses. We know we look silly. We just don't care. If you haven't tried it out, give it a whirl. You just might be surprised at how much fun it can be.

Eric Michael Summerer
via e-mail

We stand corrected. There are at least *two* curling fans in the world.

YOU! SHALL NOT! PASS!

I had been anticipating *The Third Age* for weeks. I have dreamed for so long for an *LOTR* RPG. I finally got the game the day it came out. I went back to my dorm, popped the disk in, and was very thrilled and amazed. I then went online and read your review of it and was completely shocked. I concluded that you were just *LOTR* haters....until about an hour and a half into the game I finally realized something: You were absolutely right. In that first hour and 29 minutes, all the special effects hid the crappy gameplay and the worst dialogue since the *Star Wars* movies. The fact is, this game sucks. Put "*Lord o the Rings*" and "RPG" together and you should have something really amazing. These guys managed to screw it up, and my hat goes off to them, as I feel it was quite hard to do. This is a sad day for me and people like myself, for my dream has just turned into a terrible nightmare.

Shane R.
via e-mail

WE'VE BEEN FOUND OUT!

In a blurb about *Star Wars Battlefront* you mentioned that you can hop in a snowspeeder with a friend and take down AT-ATs "just like Luke in *Empire*." Luke never took down an AT-AT in his snowspeeder, it was Wedge and Jansen. Luke lost his gunner before he had a chance.
Nerdingly yours,

John Danziger
via e-mail

You, sir, outgeek us. We are shamed. «

ASK US ANYTHING
AND WE'LL ANSWER

DVD DILEMMA

Q. I was wondering if Sony has updated the PS2's DVD drivers over the past two years. If so, wouldn't it be nice if the more recent drivers were included on the demo disc from time to time?

J.-S. Canicchio
vie e-mail

A. It would be nice, but Sony hasn't made any changes to the DVD functionality since the remote came out way back when. Sorry.

RENDER WHERE?

Q. I'm kinda new to playing videogames. What's RenderWare, and what does it do?

Rogan Derrick
via e-mail

A. RenderWare is what's called "middleware" in the business; it's a set of infinitely customizable tools that allow game designers to create games without having to build every bit of technology from scratch. RenderWare isn't the only middleware, but it's the most widely used suite.

FINAL FANTAFEE

Q. Is there an online fee for the PS2 version of *Final Fantasy XI*?

Batman
via a lair

A. Yep, it's $12.95 a month.

NO LOVE FOR VALKYRIE

Q. *Valkyrie Profile* for the PS1 has to be the best RPG I have ever played (and still is)! Do you know if Square is going to make a sequel?

Adam Beck
via e-mail

A. Nope, doesn't look that way.

LOOPHOLE?

Q. Is it legal to download game music if one owns the game but not the soundtrack?

""**
via e-mail

A. Nope. Ripping it from the disc is OK, though. Maybe. What do we look like, lawyers?

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BLOG OF THE MONTH

"Comparisons between *Killzone* and *Halo* are inevitable after the always overexcitable European gaming press dubbed the former a "*Halo* killer" when they first saw it last year. So, here's mine: While *Halo*'s a first-person shooter than everyone—no matter what game genres they like the most—should play, *Killzone*'s a first-person shooter that you'll enjoy if you really like first-person shooters.

"When I first saw someone playing it at work last week, I was struck by how much some of the environments reminded me of the original *Red Faction*'s.

"*Red Faction* was either ahead of its time or overly ambitious, depending on how you look at it. I mean, come on, it incorporated a wide variety of weapons, deformable terrain, vehicles, and stealth into a first-generation PS2 game. In the end, *Killzone* is very little like *Red Faction*, except for having some great weapons and visceral thrills."

Joe Fielder
gaiking.1UP.com

CLUB OF THE MONTH

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Enforcement Leaves Something to Be Desired

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SOON YOU'LL BE ABLE TO CHALLENGE EVERYWHERE

INSIDE

32 **DESTROY ALL HUMANS**
The aliens are coming...

36 **BATMAN BEGINS**
To move his stuff into a lair

38 **AREA 51**
Duchovny and Manson are after the truth

46 **TEKKEN 5**
Should you still care?

52 **PSP IS HERE**
And by here, we mean Japan

70 **ANIMANIA**
The wonderful world of Japanimation

72 **BY THE NUMBERS**
The page that counts

VIDEOGAMES GET MIXED GRADES

POLITICIANS GRADE RATINGS' EFFECTIVENESS

Sometimes videogames are a hot topic in Washington, D.C., circles, and sometimes they are not; regardless, the Video Game Report Card remains a constant. Once a year, National Institute on Media and the Family president Dr. David Walsh gathers a few supportive legislators and releases his findings about the marketing of violent games to younger players.

This year, with *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, *Halo 2*, *Doom 3*, and *Half-Life 2* topping the blockbuster sales list and an online phenomenon called *JFK Reloaded* awarding points to Oswald wannabes, the Report Card was presented live on C-Span and covered by all three networks and multiple news services. Prior to the event, Dr. Walsh was even interviewed on *Good Morning America*.

Speaking along with Walsh were Sen. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., who has been involved with the Report Card since it started in 1996, and Congresswoman Betty McCollum, D-Minn., who spoke at last year's Report Card. [Editorial note: Steve Kent, the author of this article, also spoke; it was the seventh Report Card in which he has participated.]

"The retailers have not made good on the promises they made at last year's Report Card," says Walsh, explaining why he gave retailers a D grade for enforcing the ESRB rating system. "Last year, the Interactive Entertainment Merchants Association said that kids would not be able to get those games. There has been improvement...but their enforcement leaves something to be desired."

Walsh's organization sends secret shoppers (i.e., kids) out to purchase games. What he found was that while only one in eight girls could buy M-rated games, 50 percent of the boys in the sting operation were successful. "All a boy has to do is try twice." While Walsh was satisfied with the ESRB rating system overall, he expressed concern that the Adults Only rating was not used often enough. (To date, only 18 games have received this rating.)

To illustrate his point, Walsh showed video clips from such games as *San Andreas*, *Halo 2*, *Mortal Kombat: Deception*, *The Guy Game*, and *Leisure Suite Larry: Magna Cum Laude*. The scenes from *Leisure Suit Larry* were so pornographic that at least one person in the audience looked away from the screen.

"In the 12 years since Senator Herb Kohl [D-Wis.] and I got involved in videogames, there have been dramatic changes," says Lieberman. "The figures in the first *Mortal Kombat* look like stick figures compared to the characters in these new games." Lieberman commented that *Leisure Suit Larry* looked more like a "pornographic tape than a videogame." He also attacked *JFK Reloaded*—a PC game that reenacts the JFK assassination—as "today's worst example of what people will do to make a buck."

"[Parents and grandparents who purchase games as gifts] have very little idea about the content of these games," says McCollum. "There is nothing that is redeeming or that is of value for any child who plays these games." McCollum says she is not concerned about adults playing the games. "I am not out to talk about banning or censoring this."

It was also suggested that ratings only work if they are easily recognized. One proposal suggested that game ratings be shifted to G, PG, PG-13, R, and NC-17—symbols that most parents can instantly identify.

The Report Card provoked responses from all facets of the videogame industry. PSVratings charged that the ESRB ratings are ambiguous and do not provide parents with enough information. The company offered up its own rating system (which offers color codings of a game's levels of profanity, sex, and violence) as an alternative for parents who desire more details about a game's content.

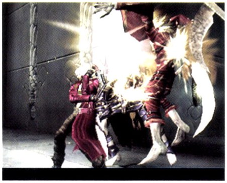
> "I AM NOT OUT TO TALK ABOUT BANNING OR CENSORING THIS."

Retailers were not happy with the Report Card's findings. Within less than 24 hours, the Interactive Entertainment Merchants Association, whose members account for 85 percent of all videogame sales in the United States, had issued a response. "Questioning the retailer's commitment to programs which are just being rolled out is fruitless in that they haven't been given a fair opportunity to implement these policies," said IEMA president Hal Halpin. "It is our belief that it is quite simply too early to assign a grade to the retailer's enforcement policies, but that if a grade needs be assigned out of habitual ritual, nothing less than an A is worthy of their collective efforts over the past 11 months." The IEMA also stated that changing the ratings system before a longer implementation period would be pointless. « Steve Kent

DEVIL MAY CRY 3

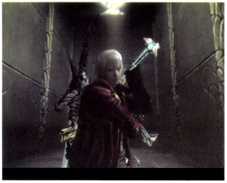
THE BREAKDOWN OF DANTE

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Capcom **Release** March



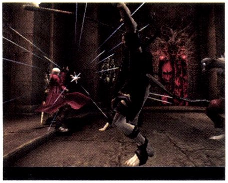
01 FIREPOWER

Dante's not one to go charging into battle without some serious firepower to back him up. Fortunately, his trusty pistols Ebony and Ivory have returned from the previous *Devil May Cry* games, along with the shotgun and a few other weapons we can't really talk about yet. Not only can you charge up these weapons so they release a slightly more devastating attack, but they can also perform different functions depending on which of the six fighting styles you're using. Say for example that you're using the shotgun combined with the trickster style; in that situation, Dante will weave a firing shotgun around his body like a pair of nunchucks. Conversely, when Ebony and Ivory are equipped, Dante can shoot in multiple directions while standing still, which is similar to one of the skills he acquired in *Devil May Cry 2*. Except this time it's actually useful.



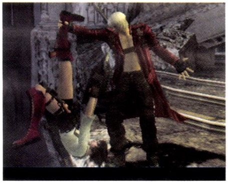
02 WEAPONRY

No doubt named after the attitude of the character who wields it, the sword Rebellion is Dante's foundation when it comes to close-range combat. If it's used in tandem with Dante's pistols or other long-range weapons, you can create some pretty spectacular combinations both up in the air and down on the ground. It also has a charge-attack feature that's pretty useful for getting Dante out of tight spots. But if you're feeling a little nostalgic for some Bruce Lee–style action, you can switch over to the nunchucks, which you earn after defeating an enormous boss early on in the game. Generally, the nunchucks are a bit faster than Rebellion, and the moves associated with them tend to be a bit more spectacular. There are more weapons to choose from (like arm guards) as the game progresses, some of which will prove to be more useful in certain situations than in others.



03 MOVES

If you played *Devil May Cry 2*, we're sorry. Thankfully, Capcom realized one of *DMC2*'s weaknesses was its lack of depth in terms of gameplay mechanics. To remedy that, *Devil May Cry 3* has six different fighting styles to choose from, though only four (trickster, royal guard, sword master, and gunslinger) are available at the beginning of the game. Each of these initial fighting styles is tied to different facets of Dante's abilities, so the sword master skill opens up new sword-based attacks while gunslinger enhances Dante's firearms. Royal guard and trickster are defensive styles, letting you block attacks or become more agile. You can enhance these styles over the course of the game to pick up new skills, but if you want to max out any single style, you have to use it throughout the entire game. Your skills change depending on the weapon equipped, so there's plenty of variety.



04 SMARTASS

Remember the Dante from the original *Devil May Cry*? You know—the one who would realize that he was talking to a giant spider made out of lava and would constantly engage in witty banter with said spider? He almost completely disappeared in *Devil May Cry 2* because the development team thought an older and more cynical Dante wouldn't be as talkative. Well, since *Devil May Cry 3* is a prequel, Dante is much younger and much more vocal. In fact, some of the best parts of *DMC3* are the exchanges between Dante and the game's surprisingly large cast of memorable (and often creepy) characters. Interestingly, producer Tsuyoshi Tanaka stresses that the team tried to make the Dante in *DMC3* look as similar to the Dante in *DMC2* as possible. He feels that since *DMC2* attracted a larger audience, its version of Dante would be the one that most people would remember.

05 SUPPORTING CAST

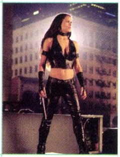
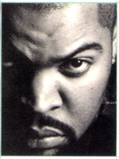
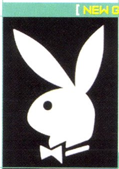
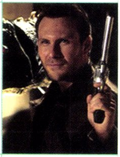
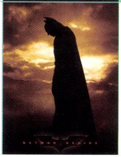
There are several new characters introduced in *Devil May Cry 3*, the most significant being Dante's brother Virgil. Unfortunately, there isn't a whole lot of information about him other then that his skills appear to be on par with Dante's and that he, obviously, also shares the blood of the demon-slayer Sparda. At various points in the game, you'll see an odd-looking bald gentleman tagging along with Virgil. His name is Arkham, and while he's obviously a bad dude, his true intentions aren't entirely clear. Lastly, there's Lady (whose picture is there to the right). She's not very nice to Dante, since he's a demon and she's somewhat of a demon hunter herself. Her goals seem to be in sync with Dante's, but you won't find out what's really going on with her until midway through the game's 20 levels. Oh yeah, and she also has different-colored eyes!

STYLISH ACTION INDEED

We can't really give you specifics, but know this: *Devil May Cry 3*'s cut-scenes are utterly insane in the best way imaginable. The development team worked closely with Links Digiworks, a company that produces CG for films, to create some of the most absurd action sequences you'll ever see. Combined, there are approximately one hour and 15 minutes' worth of cut-scenes.

JANUARY 2K5

THE MONTH AHEAD FOR YOU AND YOUR PLAYSTATION 2

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
02	03 Everyone can now exhale a sigh of relief—*Chulip* has finally arrived in stores. [NEW GAMES]		05 Sony announces the price of PSP in the United States today—check 1UP.com for up-to-the-minute information.	06 Need a 50-inch flatscreen television with leather binding around the edges? The Consumer Electronics Show gets underway in Las Vegas.		01/08 Are you going to stick with your New Year's resolutions this year? No, we won't either.
09	10 [NEW GAMES]	11 Hitting your local gaming boutique? Then look for *Mercenaries*, *Suikoden IV*, *Virtua Quest*, and *The Getaway 2*—they are all on store shelves now.		13	14 The only good part of *Daredevil* arrives in her very own movie—*Elektra* opens today.	
	17 For those who love living life vicariously through the lives of Marvel Comics heroes, *The Punisher* is now available for PS2. [NEW GAMES]	18 And for those who prefer their cartoon heroes to have a more Eastern flavor, *Fullmetal Alchemist* is now available for PS2.			21 Mr. Cube attempts to extend his box office success with the release of *Are We There Yet?*, now in theaters.	22
23		25 If you like things that are hot and fast, then it's your lucky day: *Midnight Club 3* and *Playboy: The Mansion* are both available for purchase. [NEW GAMES]	26	27	28 *Alone in the Dark* was the original survival-horror videogame. Will the movie live up to its standards? We doubt it, but you can find out for yourself today.	
30 The new Mr. Batman, Christian Bale, turns 31 today. For more info on the game, check out page 36.						

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STOLEN

THEFT GOES GLAM—CATSUIT INCLUDED

Pub. Hip Interactive **Dev.** Blue 52 **Release** April 2005

Take one sassy heroine, stir in some novel stealth-action, blend with a shot of political intrigue and survival, and then sprinkle liberally with funky gadgets, and you've got a gaming cocktail by the name of *Stolen*. Set over four huge levels, *Stolen* is a sneaky, hop-around hybrid, a stealth-a-thon that features a combination of the Prince of Persia's acrobatics, Solid Snake's gizmo toy box, and Sam Fisher's tactical know-how all embodied in the gymnastic Anya Romanov.

Anya is a professional (and quite successful) thief who gets drawn in far over her head into a sea of political intrigue and industrial espionage. But her main problem (apart from insatiable kleptomania and the minor distraction of being shadowed by a rival thief named Breeze) is that she's got morals: She won't kill anyone. She's also terrible at hand-to-hand combat, which can be problematic. Fortunately, she's got gizmos aplenty to keep her going. Her Day-Glo blue shades offer a first-person view, highlighting special items, targets, and routes you may miss in the standard third-person perspective.

Other gadgets in her Sharper Image collection include an electronic nullifier to temporarily incapacitate guards and camera systems, a sonic emitter to draw guards away from their usual patrol routes, and a sonic radar which allows Anya to see through locked doors by showing a phantom image of anyone making a noise in that room. Perhaps the most useful piece of gizmology is the motion tracker, which shows guard and camera movement with a handy vision cone on the onscreen GPS map.

Early on, these guards are saps, sleeping on the job, sticking to routines, and seemingly forgetting that they saw some chick in a snug-fitting catsuit leap around the corner. But in later levels the guards get clever, making life hellish for Anya. Developer Blue 52 is rightly pleased with its intelligence routines, but you'll probably curse them as the guards begin to work in packs, look in obscure hidey-holes, and check on any suspicious events.

Rather than skulking around and waiting in the shadows for the chance to sneak, you're encouraged to keep moving, participating in what Blue 52 calls "active evasion": Anya must dash around a lot whilst being aware of the stealth necessities. Adding to this stress-inducing gameplay are four real-time minigames liberally scattered at points where you could do without them. These include picking locks, hacking into computers, and safecracking.

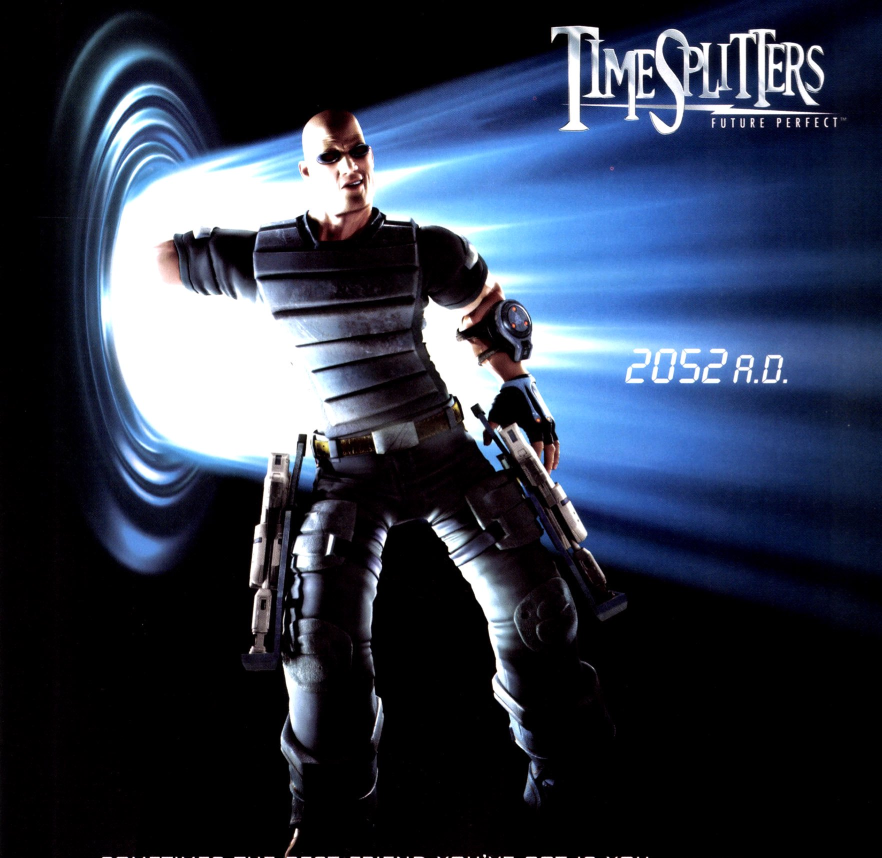
Obviously designed first and foremost for the PS2, *Stolen* already shines with its classy, elegant, and sharp visuals. Chuck in a challenging A.I. design, real-time tension, and an ultrasassy heroine to boot, and *Stolen* may just steal our hearts in time for Easter. « *Nick Walkland*

BLUE IN THE FACE

Stolen developer Blue 52 is a little-known development studio based in London's trendy Camden Town. Like *Stolen*'s Anya, Blue 52 has been lurking in the shadows, creating "alternative" game-development tools. With the backing of Sony Europe for the PS2's launch, it created tools with names like Level Devil, Resource Source, and Blue View, which offer rendering, lighting, and shading technology; funky real-time effects; and A.I. and 3D engines for developers to use to tweak the most out of the black box.

Wanting its moment in the spotlight, Blue 52 thought it would use its own goodies to make a game that showed them off to the full. Thus, more than three years ago, it commenced development of *Stolen*.

And why Blue 52? It's Marge's (of *The Simpsons* fame) preferred brand of hair dye. What's your company named after?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REGAINING HONOR

CAN MEDAL OF HONOR: DOGS OF WAR RESTORE FAITH IN EA'S FPS SERIES?

With the mediocrity of *Medal of Honor: Rising Sun,* the outright cancellation of *Rising Sun 2,* and the proliferation of similar WWII shooters on the market, the *Medal of Honor* franchise is in a precarious place. So how is *Medal of Honor: Dogs of War* going to gain any trust back?

Executive Producer Dan Winters thinks a new direction for *MOH* is going to win gamers. Describing the previous games in relation to *Dogs of War*, "I like to think of previous games in the *MOH* franchise as being like a roller coaster," says Winters. "In them, the player was led through an emotionally satisfying experience by a tight design, relying chiefly on linearity and control to enable the player to achieve his goals. With *Dogs of War*, we wanted to take this in a new direction, one that we think advances the category and the genre. Rather than a roller coaster, think of *Dogs of War* as the entire amusement park. Just as a visitor to an amusement park chooses which attraction to go to first, enjoys that experience, and then moves on to the next ride, we've made player choice the driving force behind *Dogs of War*." Winters lists some new features like battle plans (a designated approach to a mission), squad control elements, enemy trophies, and a rally meter (which measures how well you're playing and rewards you with bursts of adrenaline) that help "open up" *Dogs of War*.

EA is confident that this more open-ended approach is going to both wipe away the bitter taste of *Rising Sun* and keep the genre moving forward. While some players are starting to get sick of WWII shooters, Winters thinks that's due to other games contributing to stagnation, not an audience-wide disdain for WWII shooters. "If we can continue to build on what we've done in the past, focus continually on raising the bar on quality and authenticity, then I think the genre has the potential to continue indefinitely. I think that *Dogs of War* will help to do just that." Is Winters right, do we just need the right game, or are we all simply just tired of WWII? All eyes are on *Dogs of War* to see what the answer will be. «

DOG DAYS

Don't be surprised if *Dogs of War* sees a few delays during its scheduled release in 2005. The team may need the extra time to add some polish.

Pub EA Games **Dev.** EA L.A. **Release** Mid 2005

ZOE FLOWER

BACK TO THE FUTURE

ZOE FLOWER aka "Gamer Girl," creates TV programs and music videos, and looks good doing it. See the details at zoeflower.1UP.com.

It's so weird! This week, for various random reasons, three people have told me that they think I'm from the future, based on such insights as 1) my girlish love of videogames and power tools; 2) the fact that my homeland has retinal scans at the airport; and 3) my recent imitation of the Terminator 3000 as I chased a stolen car up my street last Sunday morning. (Yes, I got the license plate even though I couldn't tell the police anything about the car other than that it was silver and boxy.)

Speaking of the future, the PSP is hitting Japan as I type this, and it will soon land on my own doorstep, along with a sexy pale-green mini iPod (hopefully…c'mon Santa! I've not been that naughty!). And while I might not be obsessing over the PSP like one gadget-happy editor-in-chief who is willing to eat his child's shoes if it doesn't become the biggest thing ever (see his 1UP blog for yourself), I'm fascinated by what it may mean for the future of games. I might even chew gingerly on my own Pumas if Sony's new platform could promise to not only revolutionize gaming, but perhaps return it to its roots. That's right! I want to see a Michael J. Fox–inspired *Back to the Future* renaissance in which games are fun first, with framerates that could detach my retinas taking a lower priority.

I USUALLY FIRE UP TETRIS ON MY CELL PHONE TO GET MY FUN FIX.

I don't know about you, but I'm SO tired of waiting expectantly to find out if the occasional "innovative, genre-converging and/or redefining, true open environment, epic, cinematic, wholly immersive, graphically mind boggling, steal every waking second of your life" game will bore me stiff or make me forget to go to bed for a week. I usually opt to fire up *Tetris* on my cell phone just to get my pure fun fix! Give me *Alien Hominid* or *God of War* any day (hurry David Jaffe! Hurry!) And give me the PSP. For once, a handheld looks like something the average adult Joe or Jane (sorry Joe, I didn't mean you!) wouldn't be afraid to pull out in public and which seems to have a developer mandate that puts instant fun first.

One developer friend summed it up perfectly. In order to keep the handheld user interested, he now has to make game experiences that become compelling within the time it takes to go two bus stops…and it's a perfect example of how gaming on the PSP could "free the minds" of game creators everywhere. After all, just because we've reached a point technologically where we CAN (e.g., *GTA: San Andreas, MGS3*), doesn't necessarily mean we SHOULD (e.g., making us feed our characters instead of letting us get on with more fun things, like eating our own shoes). I, for one, am counting on the PSP to help us get back to the sheer simplicity of times gone by. And for that promise, I'd consider devouring my favorite stilettos. «

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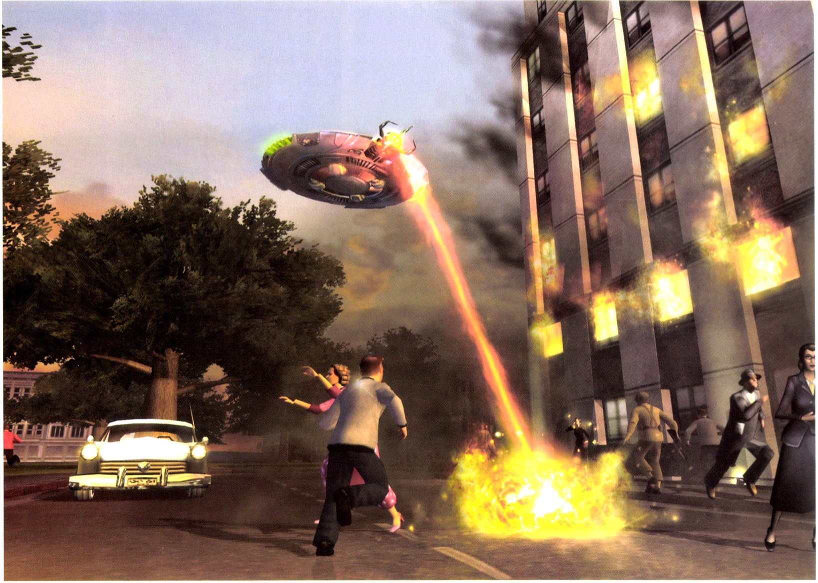
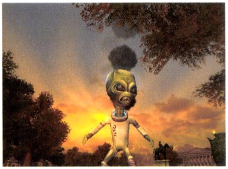
BROTHER'S KEEPER
Cryptosporidium-137 is in search of his brother, last heard from at Roswell. He's also in search of a few nice human brain stems so he can reproduce. Any volunteers?

DESTROY ALL HUMANS

SO THE ALIENS CAN REIGN SUPREME

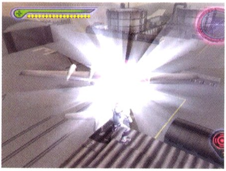




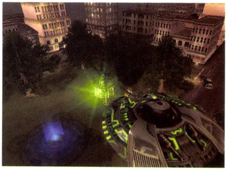
After delivering the impressive genre-blending first-person strategy game *Full Spectrum Warrior* on Xbox last year (which is making its long-awaited move to PS2 later this year), Pandemic hit us with the first truly exciting *Star Wars* game in *Battlefront* before moving on to be the first development team to marry emergent gameplay and all the fun of a digital sandbox with a concept that doesn't have anything to do with gangsters: In other words, it brought us *Mercenaries*. Pandemic is on fire right now, make no mistake, so it's time to name the studio's next effort, *Destroy All Humans*, as one of the next big games to get excited about. Like all of the group's recent projects, this is a game that enjoys the distinctions of being ambitious and witty while not being a sequel to anything. These emergent epics have a tendency to be quite complicated to explain, so we asked producer Brad Welch to dumb it down for us as much as he possibly could.

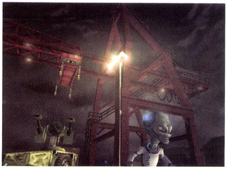
"You play as Cryptosporidium-137," he explains. "He's an alien from the furon race, and these guys clone themselves rather than breed. As you can imagine, this requires a constant supply of fresh furon DNA, and to help this, the furons seeded humanity with their DNA long ago. The game begins by explaining that Crypto's clone brother, Crypto-136, was sent back to Earth to harvest this DNA, but was shot down at Roswell. Now Crypto-137 has come to Earth to find his brother and suck out lots of human brain stems—brains full of juicy furon DNA.

"As you'd expect, the main influence was the B movies of the '50s," he explains. "They are full of invasions, flying saucers, body snatching, stupid humans, and Communist paranoia. We also wove in more modern ideas such as government cover-ups, *Communion*-style alien abduction and probing, the MJ-12 documents, Von Daniken's *Chariots of the Gods*, *Men in Black*, crop circles, *The X-Files*...if it's got something to do with aliens, we were probably influenced by it in some way. The game is a mix of both retro and contemporary—we wanted the furons to be mod-



Surely the townspeople would know who has the weakest will! Scan the humans to





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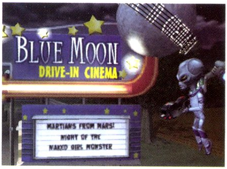


ALL ABOUT FURONS

Furons are from the planet Gorta, which orbits the larger binary stars in the Proxima Centauri system. Gorta is faintly visible from Earth.

All furon names translate to the scientific names of nasty diseases. For example, a cryptosporidium is a a single-celled parasite that lives in the intestines of animals and people. This microscopic pathogen causes a disease called cryptosporidiosis. The most common symptom is watery diarrhea. There may also be abdominal cramps, nausea, low-grade fever, dehydration, and weight loss.

Furons all have the same size feet, we're told. "Shoe theft is very common, as is the purchase of shoe deodorizers," our source tells us.

One suggested reason for the declining reproduction of furons was their unfortunate ability to read minds. Female furons would know whenever their partners' minds wandered or thought that their new outfits really did make their butts look big.

Furons are tone-deaf, leading to suspicions that some of their species are now working as A&R people at record labels.

Telepathy destroyed the furon comedy scene, as everyone always knew the punch line.

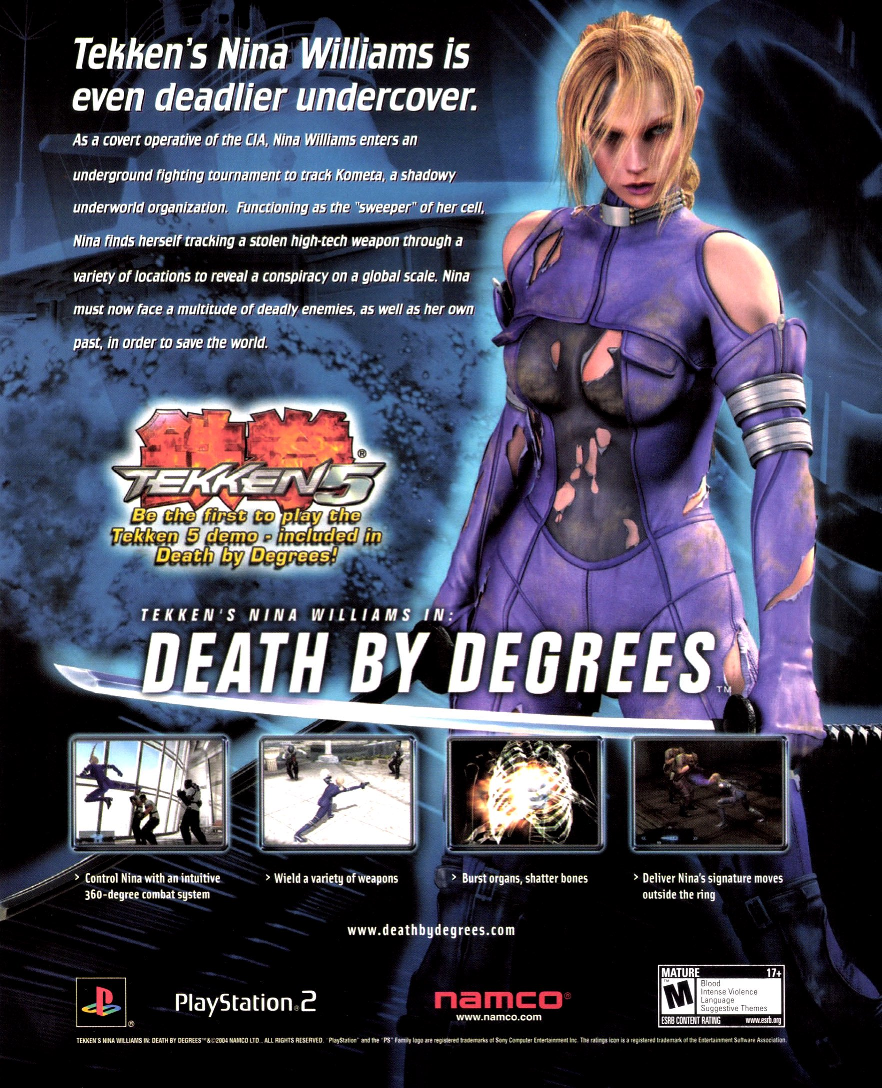
Size is important in furon culture. The bigger the brain, the greater the telepathic power.

ern and high-tech and cool, so we didn't want you flying around in a cardboard flying saucer. The humans and invasion sites, however, are very '50s—the motto within the team for the humans is that we want every one of them to be a walking stereotype. A lot of the humor in the game comes from that."

So what of the gameplay? How do you take these themes and weave them into a modern experience? "*GTA* was an obvious influence," Welch admits. "This was mostly in that we wanted to capture the same 'do anything you want, go anywhere you want' spirit. Pandemic L.A.'s *Mercenaries* was also an influence, since they are also doing open worlds with destructible environments. The witty and absurd humor of old-school LucasArts games like *Sam & Max* and *Grim Fandango* is also in the mix. This is pretty different [from] our previous games," he continues. "I think the key design thing we've learned is to not make the player have to read the designer's mind to succeed at the game—obviously, they can't do that and are going to end up frustrated. Oh, and not letting 'reality' get in the way of fun gameplay."

When pushed on whether the vast, sprawling experiences influenced by games like *GTA* are the future of videogames, Welch is more pensive than most, citing the new trend in emergent gameplay as a more important development than open worlds. "Physics is not going to go away," he explains, "and that allows a lot of emergent situations to develop. It requires lots of QA, too! Making A.I. more reactive and entertaining is an important factor, too, as it makes things more fun and adds an emergent quality. Note—I said 'entertaining,' not 'realistic,' there," he adds. "Open worlds are going to stay optional, I think. It doesn't really suit many types of games. Really, there are not a lot of games following this path at the moment—it's challenging and expensive to make an open-world game." «

Pub THQ Dev Pandemic Release Q1 2005



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BATMAN BEGINS

THE DARK KNIGHT STRIKES AGAIN

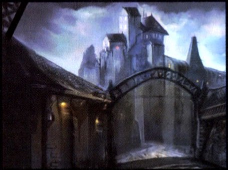
Did you know that Bruce Wayne once fought a roomful of ninjas?

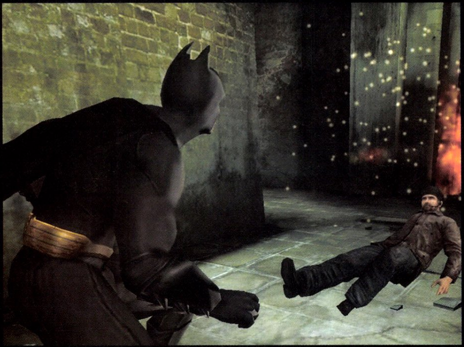
Well, that's what happens around page 27 of an early draft of the script for the movie *Batman Begins*, which revisits the time between young Bruce Wayne watching his parents get gunned down over a pearl necklace and his taking his first major case as Batman. (Random trivia: This same time period almost became the basis for a TV show. WB had two proposals, one called *Bruce Wayne*, which followed Wayne's travels around the world as he trained to become Batman, and another called *Smallville*, featuring a young Clark Kent. WB chose *Smallville*.)

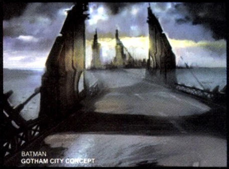
EA's upcoming game is based directly on the film, so a lot of what is known so far is extrapolated from information about the movie. *Batman Begins* is very different from previous entries in the franchise (which should help earn goodwill from fans who felt betrayed by drivel like *Batman & Robin*). There won't be elaborate, goofy costumes; laughing psychotics; or bird-shaped gangsters here. The villains are mobsters and cult leaders and irate professors. The story should answer a lot of questions, like where the suit comes from, who runs Wayne Industries while Bruce is out fighting ninjas (board member Lucius Fox), and who makes the Batmobile—and yes, the Batmobile will be a part of the game, though no one at EA is spilling any details yet.

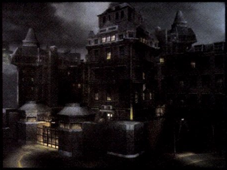
One of Batman's defining moments takes place when he coins the phrase "criminals are a superstitious and cowardly lot" and decides to use the image of a bat to scare the bejesus out of them. This is one of the key game mechanics in EA's *Batman Begins* game—Batman will need to figure out each criminal's specific fear, and exploit it. You'll be fighting with more than just your mind though: Available weapons

Batman Begins covers the ground of what is widely considered the best Batman story, *Batman: Year One*, by Frank Miller. You can find this volume in pretty much any store, book or comic book. The movie and game aren't straight adaptations of *Year One*, though, so don't expect to see a precostume Catwoman in her day job as a prostitute.









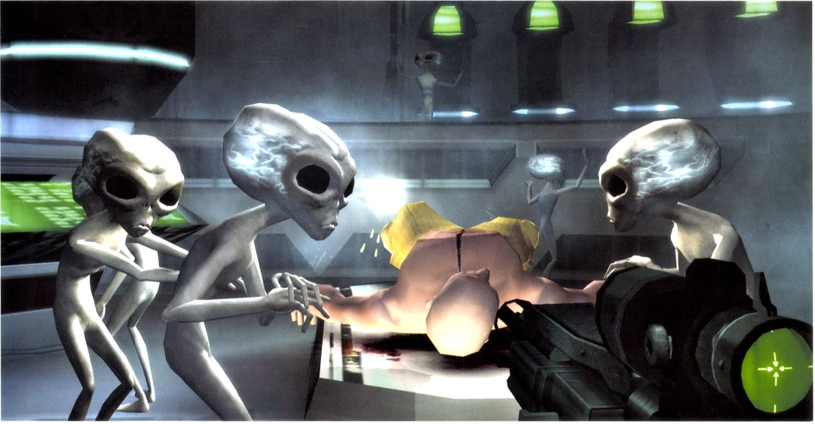
include Batarangs, optic cables, and flashbang grenades. In keeping with the "make the criminals fear you" theme, *Batman Begins* won't be just a straight beat-em-up, but instead will be a more stealth-driven game. As mentioned last issue, it's the first title completed under Warner Bros.' new policy regarding licensed games and quality control, so the game should be a whole lot better than *Catwoman*.

Onscreen, the cast is a very solid and talented lot, boasting names like Christian Bale, Michael Caine, Gary Oldman, Liam Neeson, Ken Watanabe, and Morgan Freeman, but it's yet to be announced whether these actors will be providing voicework for the game as well. *Batman*'s writer is David Goyer, who penned the *Blade* screenplays (widely considered the first successful Marvel adaptations) and wrote a few issues of *JSA*, so he knows how to do both comics and films. For the suits at Warner Bros., this will be what reestablishes Batman as an iconic character and lets people wash away their memories of a frozen Schwarzenegger spouting horrible puns at a nippled-up George Clooney.

The same way there hasn't been a good Batman movie since, well, *Batman*, there hasn't been a good Batman game since *Batman Returns* on the SNES. 2005 might just be the year that redefines Batman. «

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** Eurocom **Release** June

Joe Toreno



ALIEN AUTOPSY

MARILYN MANSON AND DAVID DUCHOVNY ON AREA 51

***Area 51*'s human protagonist,** Ethan Cole, and alien antagonist, Edgar, are tied inextricably together for significant portions of the game. But David Duchovny, the voice of Ethan, and Marilyn Manson, the voice of Edgar, had never met—until we decided to lock them in a room together and force them to interview each other about the game. You might think the two couldn't possibly be more different. Turns out they have a lot more in common than anyone expected, like a deadpan sense of humor, a love of complete non sequiturs, and an appreciation for raunchy and provocative conversation (don't say we didn't warn you). In the end, they left the interview room as fast friends and, possibly, future collaborators. And we got every minute on tape.

MARILYN MANSON Well, I'm Edgar; which character are you?

DAVID DUCHOVNY Ethan Cole.

MM Oh, you're the guy I f*** with.

DD Yeah.

MM Good.

DD I'm glad you know. I played *Asteroids*; that was my involvement in videogames. Do you remember that game?

MM Yeah. I remember having a ColecoVision because we weren't rich enough to afford the better game.

DD That's a videogame, ColecoVision?

MM See, that's how bad it was. It was like the Sears videogame. *Donkey Kong, Jr.* was [their] apex of technology. So, you got out early.

DD Yeah. But it's made a comeback. I saw it in a Hummer commercial. It's now nostalgic to have played *Asteroids*.

MM My rear was showing, so that's the *Asteroids* analogy. No, from what I've played of the game, my [character's] whole thing is to torture [your character].

DD I was doing some of the voice today, and I saw a bit where you rose up and mocked me. And I recognized your voice, and I said, "Oh, there he is," because I knew that you were going to be doing it. I didn't know that you were going to be mocking me.

MM I didn't either, but I liked it.

> "IT'S NOW NOSTALGIC TO HAVE PLAYED ASTEROIDS."

MM Hummers and *Asteroids*. It's in the new issue of *Honcho*. I ended up in an issue of *Honcho* against my will. Some photographer sold pictures of me.

DD In what state of...

MM Pretend like you don't know what *Honcho* is; it's a gay magazine.

DD It's too late.

DD No, I enjoyed being mocked. I would like some more, please, if you can.

MM The woman who was directing me, she looked very conservative, like a PTA meeting type, and she started to get really violent, like a soccer mom. "Kill him! Let's get that guy!"

DD How did you find doing the voice? Did you like taking that direction? Or did you want to attack her?

MM Well, I think they had me in mind a little bit when they designed it. The character, aside from its looks, is not that dissimilar. He just kind of mocks people, has a distaste for mankind. That's what I identify with; I didn't have a great knowledge of Area 51 and the alien aspect of it. But you believe in the unknown, obviously.

DD Well, I believe in the unknown, yeah, but not necessarily in the form that it took in the show that I did. I tend to believe that a conspiracy that big is impossible. I know people that can't keep any kind of silly secret.

MM I'll tell you a conspiracy—I won't go into it because it'll take hours—but if you're lucky enough to find a book called *Sex and Rockets*—

DD I have that book. I wanted to make that book into a movie.

MM So did I.

DD It's a great story.

MM If you guys don't know, the person who created atomic fuel—who, for the most part, was responsible for the atomic bomb—did it because he wanted to destroy the world. He wrote *The Antichrist Manifesto* a week before he mysteriously died in his garage.

DD Yeah, he blew himself up.

MM Allegedly. He knew how to build a bomb, but he blew up from an aerosol can in his garage or something? But it's a scary, scary story. It would make a good movie.

DD I think so.

MM But it would cause a lot of problems, I think. Because the world doesn't know that. For the world to think that someone in the government was associated with the occult in such a way—

DD He was a disciple of Aleister Crowley, right?

MM He was very good friends with Aleister Crowley, and he went out in the desert to create this "Babalon Working," which was to bring about the end of the world. Which, when you think about it, why else would you create the atom bomb? It's strange, it's scary, and maybe it shouldn't be a movie because then they'll make it into action figures or something. But...obviously there's something greater than us.

DD Right.

MM I like to paint and represent myself as an artist; I don't think you can be an artist and put things into the world unless you believe there's something worthwhile in the world. And I think my house is haunted.

DD You do? By a specific something?

MM The house that I just moved out of, it belonged to Mary Astor, and the Rolling Stones lived there when they wrote *Let It Bleed*. And I lived there, and I stayed in isolation in the attic during the period when I was blamed for Columbine and got wrapped up in that. So I think that house was haunted by me. It had too many bad memories. So I moved into this house in Chatsworth, which is the porn capital of the world, I guess.

"I DIDN'T HAVE A GREAT KNOWLEDGE OF AREA 51."

DD So it's haunted by porn. That's a better haunting, I think. There are ghosts f***ing in my closet.

MM That reminds me of a strange story my friend told me: He was having sex with this woman, and she said, "Someone's in here." But he didn't understand what she meant; he thought she meant in the room, but she said, "No, someone's in here," like there was another person involved in this whole...coitus.

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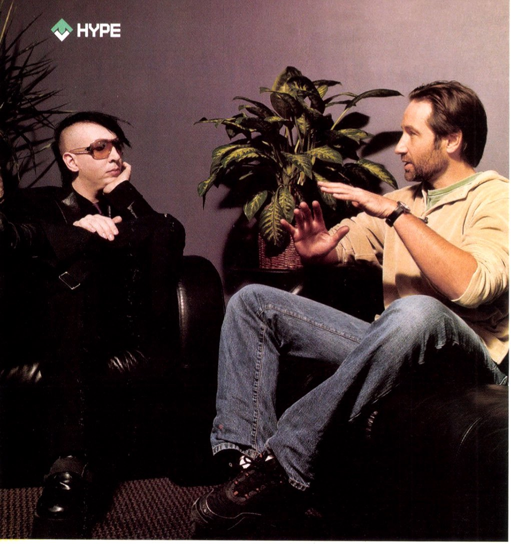


BUT SERIOUSLY...

MANSON AND DUCHOVNY ON VIDEOGAME VIOLENCE

DAVID DUCHOVNY I think that the whole argument over whether violence in television, or violence in games, or violence in movies creates more violence in the world or acts as a kind of purgative—it's a ridiculous argument to be having because you're never going to solve it.

MARILYN MANSON I think—and I've said this before—that times are far less violent and far more televised. You're just seeing it more. If there had been television during the Civil War, I'm sure people would not have been real thrilled about what was going on.

DD It's just something that politicians bring up to circumvent the real issue, which is, What do you do about actual violence?

MM What's Bush listening to right now, you know?

DD Yeah, he's a violent man; what's he listening to?

MM Cain and Abel didn't have music; they didn't have videogames. If you want to kill people, join the Army. That's the sad irony of it all.

DD But you're never going to figure out that chicken-and-egg question.

MM It's man's nature to destroy, and that's why I think art is important. And it doesn't mean you have to be an artist—"art" sounds so pretentious—but just be creative in whatever you do. That's what separates you from being that other element. That's what "God" and "Satan"—that's what those words are all about. Sometimes it's writing a song, sometimes it's wearing lipstick. It doesn't always have to be serious; it can be fun. [*Points at Duchovny*] For him it's a beard.

DD That's my stand. I'm making my stand.

DD Wow, D.P.! I like that. On *The X-Files* we never investigated extraterrestrial D.P. It's too bad.

MM I think I was on *The X-Files*, wasn't I? Wasn't there a crime scene where my record was—like a cult?

DD Possibly. I know that there was an episode that I directed that was kind of a *Jacob's Ladder*-type...uh, rip-off...and I looked at your videos because I think some of your videos have the effect from *Jacob's Ladder*, with the head going back and forth?

MM The 12-frames-per-second thing.

DD Yeah, that kind of stuff. And I got the whole box set of your videos and I watched them, and I just thought they were fantastic videos. The imagery was—I still have it in my head. And I'm sure that came from you.

MM Thanks, it did. I tend to direct everything, but I like to collaborate with people because you can't do everything.

DD But I think it's been really influential. You look at something like—I haven't seen it, but there's a movie coming out called *Saw* that looks like a bunch of your videos.

MM I watched that this morning—a bootleg version.

DD Oh, you wanted to see it! How was it?

MM I liked the website; it drew me in with its narrative. And that's what I like about videogames. I was reading a book called *Pause and Effect*, about the importance of narrative in culture. And that's the one thing that will sustain, when people are worried about movies or music being downloaded, because the narratives are very important. I've got to say I'm a little jaded, though, because when they threw the 12-frames *Jacob's Ladder* head shake, I had to say, "Come on, guys." But I didn't say it for me; I said it for *Jacob's Ladder*. I'm more like *Jacob's Footstool*.

DD I think you're right about narrative, though. I've got a 5-year-old daughter, and she watches videos and always wants to know what happens next. That's just human instinct. What's the story? How does the story go? What's next?

MM It's also that we get conditioned to sum things up for ourselves, and kids just have that beautiful, endless imagination that I'm always trying to regain and hold on to. I look at it this way: Kids don't fall down until they learn about gravity. If I decide to have kids—I'm getting married at the beginning of next year—I would wait until I'm done doing my decadent behavior, to be a proper father.

DD I don't think you have to stop with the decadent behavior before you have kids. I think that if you do what you want to do, that kids appreciate that.

MM I would just want to be around.

DD So you don't want to tour.

MM The touring, and the, you know, being accused of rubbing my genitals on security guards and things like that.

DD Which part of the security guard?

MM They're facing [away from the stage], so I suppose the back of his neck. Which, I suppose, in some parts of the world is—

DD A compliment.

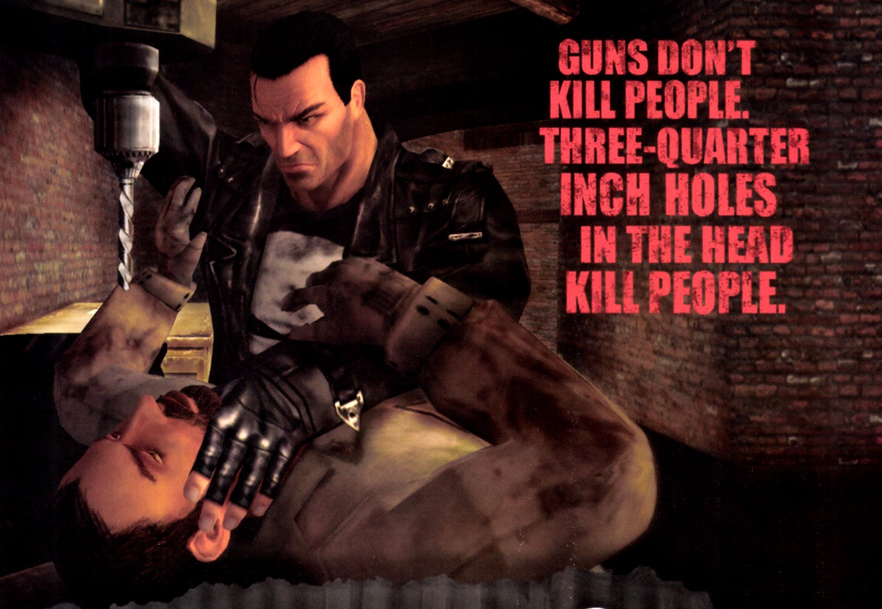
MM —an erogenous zone.

DD And a compliment. I grew up thinking it was a compliment.

MM Well, if you're going to get in trouble for things like that, I think you should at least have a happy ending. «

"THE NARRATIVE DREW ME IN—THAT'S WHAT I LIKE ABOUT GAMES."

ON 1UP.COM
Manson and Duchovny, the R-rated version. Want to see the whole sordid interview, uncut and uncensored? Head over to opm.1UP.com for the link.



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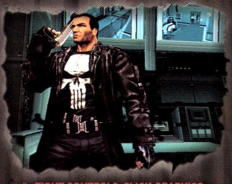

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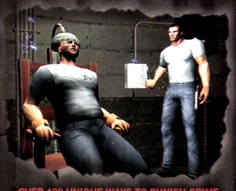

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TEKKEN 5

RETURN OF THE IRON FIST

***Tekken* has long been identified** with the PS2, even more so than *Soul Calibur*. However, since *Tekken 4*, the franchise has taken a backseat to games like *Soul Calibur II* and *Virtua Fighter 4*. Namco is hoping that *Tekken 5* will not only fill the gap between *SC2* and a possible *SC3*, but also reclaim *Tekken*'s prestige.

Director Masahiro Kimoto's basic philosophy for *Tekken 5* is "to make the game attractive to anyone who saw the gameplay. Rather than adding new features to the game system," he explains, "we focused on fine-tuning the game to optimize the performance the franchise already offered." Additionally, one of his goals for *Tekken 5* was for it to feel more like earlier *Tekken*s. So how do you go about achieving that goal? Kimoto answers, "*Tekken 4* was different from other *Tekken* titles because the characters were too balanced and few moves caused major damage. Originally, in the *Tekken* franchise, characters were more uneven and some of the moves were outrageously powerful. It was fun to be able to turn the tables on a well-seasoned player with a powerful move that you could land by chance. These elements somewhat diminished as we carried on with [later] titles. In that sense, *Tekken 5* has a feel that is closer to that of the early *Tekken* games."

One of the most notable criticisms players had with *Tekken 4* was the inclusion of walled arenas. Kimoto comments, "We didn't completely eliminate arenas with walls, because [we] believe there is potential in battles close to the wall." He further explains that the development team messed around with the size of the arena to make some fights feel more enclosed and others more flexible. Another tweak made to the fighting engine was revising the crouch and jump recognition—crouches are no longer vulnerable to standing attacks, and you can actually avoid sweep kicks by jumping over them.

Despite the fact that the team is focused more on fine-tuning the game's feel as opposed to adding random new features, *Tekken 5* still has some novelties not seen in previous titles. Namco has taken a cue from *VF4* by adding a variety of buyable accessories to let players personalize their fighters. And, of course, like other sequels, expect some new characters with whom to land kicks and punches.

Will *Tekken 5* win back fans? Kimoto says, "*Tekken 5* is a title that has stayed true to the *Tekken* series while adding new and innovative features. Some franchises go through a complete makeover to accommodate the demand of the time, but we believe that our mission is to create the most exciting fighting game." The team's method of balancing subtle tweaks that fine-tune the game back to the style of its predecessors while adding new content is an interesting one, and it may help *Tekken* reclaim its place as a serious PS2 fighter. «

Pub. Namco **Dev.** Namco **Release** March

MAKING A NEW CHARACTER

Kimoto explains the basic genesis for three of the new characters in *Tekken 5*: "Asuka Kazama started as a character who inherits Jun Kazama's moves. We first discussed whether this character should be male or female. We then decided her age, personality, outfit, and so on. At the same time, we implemented her model and motion and worked on her moves and specific elements. Feng Wei is conceived as a Chinese Kenpo expert with much more powerful moves than the characters who appeared in previous *Tekken* titles. Raven is easier to control, with each hit extremely powerful and unique."

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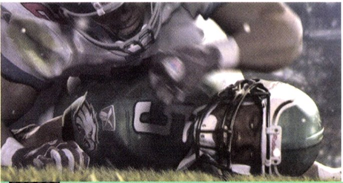
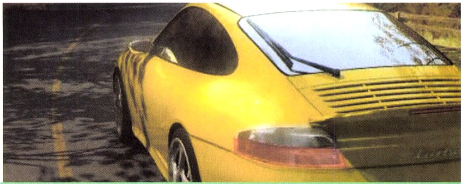




WHAT THE CELL?

FORMER XBOX HARDWARE DESIGN COMPANY JOINS PS3 TEAM

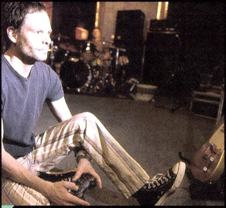
It's suddenly become a little clearer why Nvidia, PC graphics card and Xbox hardware designer, didn't aggressively pursue a contract to design the hardware for Microsoft's follow-up to Xbox. Nvidia announced that it has been working jointly with Sony over the past two years to develop a custom graphics processing unit (GPU) that will work in conjunction with the PlayStation 3's main processor, which has been code-named Cell. The deal is similar to Nvidia's previous agreement with Microsoft; the company will receive royalty fees for every PlayStation 3 sold, which could prove to be quite lucrative for Nvidia. In addition, the agreement states that Nvidia will provide graphics development tools along with other software to make PlayStation 3 development a little easier. ATI, Nvidia's rival in the PC hardware market, is currently developing GPUs for both Nintendo and Microsoft for their next-generation hardware.

Coinciding with the Sony Nvidia announcement, Electronic Arts CFO Warren Jenson gave a presentation at the Credit Suisse First Boston Technology Conference to offer a glimpse of what the market should expect from the PlayStation 3 and other next-generation systems. Jenson showed two images—one was of a football game and the other of a driving game. Jenson said that the images displayed would be possible to create on next-generation systems, stating, "Imagine that the characters in a football game will be capable of showing real emotion. That's what's going to be possible with next-generation technology." Of course, as with any prelaunch system hype, expectations are generally higher than what the hardware is capable of actually producing. Even in the months before the PlayStation 2 launch, some were claiming that the system's visual quality would rival that of Pixar's *Toy Story* films. «

While it's somewhat unlikely that the PS3 will be able to produce a football game with the level of detail in the shot at above left, the driving game pictured at above right is definitely within the realm of possibility.

THE OUTSIDER

SCREWING UP MY CHILD



ROBIN WILSON is lead singer for the Gin Blossoms, and is mentally not much older than his son. Find him on 1UP at theoutsider.1UP.com.

My son Grey is 3 years old now. And I can see that all the karma I've contributed to the universe is crashing down upon me. I never had any trouble believing my dad when he told me it would happen one day, and here it is. As a father I have to be careful about what kind of media I expose my child to. But the geekety-geek I am can't wait for my boy to share in life's finer things, such as comic books, science fiction, and videogames.

I've tried to get him playing with me on the PS2, but the controller is just too much for his little brain and hands. Sure, he can hit Square or X when you tell him to, but using both hands at the same time seems just beyond his abilities for now. He has a blast making Sly Cooper jump or smash stuff, but he just doesn't get the big picture. If I leave him unattended for a moment, he ends up mindlessly jumping in a corner.

I'm sure the good folks at SCEA are all very busy entertaining us and making money, but I have to ask them: Where are the kids' games? What I want is a PS2 peripheral for tots, a kid-sized DualShock with kid-styled buttons. Or even just a big joystick with a button on top, like the new "TV Games." Is this asking for too much? If Sony wants to extend the life span of the PS2 well into the PS3 cycle, this is one way to do it.

Like millions of other dads (and moms), I know for an absolute fact that I am getting a PS3 when they are available. It's a done deal. Take my money now. But then a lot of us parents will have an extra videogame console to pawn off on the kids. I know there are lots of great PC games for kids, but I'm not thrilled about tying up my beautiful Macintosh computer so my snot-nosed, greasy-fingered hellion can paste flames on CG fire trucks. The PS2, however, would be the perfect platform for this.

So here's what SCEA should do: Make some *Sesame Street* and *Bob the Builder* platformers that teach the ABCs and whatnot, and combine them with a kiddy peripheral. Sony gets another cash cow, and we parents get a cheap, powerful educational tool and digital baby-sitter. It's win-win!

But believe that I have my eyes on the prize. What I really want to do is train my son to have the manual dexterity and hand-eye coordination he'll need to be a musician or a surgeon or to pilot robots on Mars. A little help please? «

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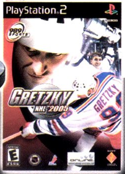

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989 SPORTS PlayStation.2

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EVERYONE
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Violence

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KOEI

BUILDING AN EMPIRE ON PLAYSTATION

KESSEN III

Pub. Koei **Dev.** Koei **Release** Available now

DYNASTY WARRIORS PSP

Pub. Koei **Dev.** Koei **Release** March

If Keiko Erikawa had gotten her way, Koei would have made a *Lord of the Rings* game.

"What if we didn't use the *Lord of the Rings* license, but we made a game based on Celtic lore, myths from Eastern Europe, and Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* saga?" asked the CEO of Koei. Upon hearing responses in the vein of "That might work, a *Dynasty Warriors* for the Western audience" from the journalists, she promptly decided to green-light the project—jokingly, of course. We think.

Koei might not carry the big-name cachet of an EA or a Square Enix, but as a staunch supporter of Sony's machine, it's a significant company for PlayStation gamers nonetheless. Koei jumped into PSP game development almost immediately after the PSP was announced (*Dynasty Warriors PSP* will be one of the few non-EA games at launch), and Erikawa is confident that Koei will get cracking on Cell (the techie code name for PS3) development soon. Erikawa and her husband, producer Kou Shibusawa, were willing to sit down, show their next few games, and discuss the future of Koei.

KESSEN III

The original *Kessen* was a launch title for PS2, and both Koei and SCEI have identified the franchise with the PS2. It's been said that SCEI President Ken Kutaragi is a fan himself—he had SCEI finance an amusing commercial for *Kessen III* in which hundreds of young boys reenact a battle from the game.

The first *Kessen* game played it safe by having gamers take control of Ieyasu Tokugawa, one of the most well-known shoguns in Japanese history. You get to plan his battle strategy and then see the battles unfold in real time. *Kessen II* continued to refine the formula by making the battle graphics more detailed and giving players a bit more control over the troops on the

Sergeant [Uesugi Army]
19 KO
Captain [Uesugi Army]
7
28
17 KO
23
15
8 K
23 KO
3 KO

ONI

THE FUTURE IS IN THE PAST

aWhat about *Oni*, a PS3 title announced for 2006? If you didn't know, *Oni* is a collaboration between Koei and Akira Kurosawa's son, Hisao Kurosawa. Shibusawa will work with Kurosawa on developing the movie, and Shibusawa will then focus his time on the game. *Oni* at the moment exists as a partial script from the late Akira Kurosawa, and, like many of his movies, is a 16th-century samurai tale. Right now, the focus is on developing the script and casting the main hero—if you happen to be tall, blonde, and fluent in Japanese, you might try auditioning for a shot to be in both a game and a movie!

battlefield. However, *K2* changed perspective by moving the setting to China during the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* saga. *K3* not only returns to Japan, but puts you in a somewhat controversial role: Oda Nobunaga. Yes, the same Oda Nobunaga who's often demonized as a ruthless conqueror—in some games, he's portrayed as a literal demon lord (ahem, *Onimusha*). Shibusawa has always been intrigued by the life of Oda Nobunaga (after all, Shibusawa also made *Nobunaga's Ambition* for the NES), and he wanted to show gamers what Nobunaga was like before he started rolling with the evil side.

Shibusawa also wants to bridge the gap between action and strategy gamers. There's still plenty of tactics and planning, as in previous installments of the *Kessen* franchise, but in the battles themselves you can control individual officers who control groups of soldiers on the battlefield—a sight that's very familiar to *Dynasty Warriors* players. Instead of issuing orders, you actually move around and attack in real time, just like in *Dynasty Warriors*—except you're controlling an entire battalion instead of just one fellow. And despite the historical detail, there's a fair bit of fantasy as well, such as one of Nobunaga's ninjas conjuring a dragon to attack the enemy.

DYNASTY WARRIORS PSP

Dynasty Warriors is another one of Koei's flagship products, so it's no surprise that this action-filled game will be one of the first titles to hit the PSP. While the handheld is widely considered a powerful, portable version of the PS2 (rather than a mere portable), several considerations had to be made for *Dynasty Warriors* to work on the PSP.

For example, because it's portable, people will probably play games in shorter sessions than they would on the PS2. So rather than have huge battlefields, the map has been divided into smaller sectors that take 15 to 30 minutes to capture; PSP gamers can choose just how long their session can be. Also, it's been pointed out that having a 16:9 LCD screen necessitates adaptation, both to fill the wider space (in this case with area maps in addition to the main action), and to compensate for the way LCDs handle rapid motion.

Despite all of the alterations that have been made to gameplay on PSP, the core is still *Dynasty Warriors*. You "only" see hundreds of soldiers onscreen, instead of thousands. All 42 characters from *DW3* are here, replete with special techniques and whatnot. Additionally, each character will have a bodyguard who will supply additional skills and aid (the bodyguard assumes the function that the random on-field pickups fulfilled).

These two titles are the company's immediate projects, but there are a few more ideas in Koei's pipeline. In addition to *Oni* (see sidebar above), Shibusawa already has ideas for a *Kessen IV* for the PS3—with a possible multiplayer mode in which gamers conduct strategic warfare online as well. Erikawa comments that based on what she's heard from SCEI about Cell, SCEI plans to position it as more than a mere gaming machine (which mirrors the rumors circulating about the Xbox successor being an all-in-one media center). Additionally, Erikawa says that SCEI is thinking about the success of online games and making MMORPG-style games (à la *Final Fantasy XI*) a more prominent part of Cell's library—something that Koei is familiar with due to the many Japan-only MMO games it publishes. And, perhaps, Koei's epic Western action game dealing in Celtic and Scandinavian lore might be a PS3 launch title. «

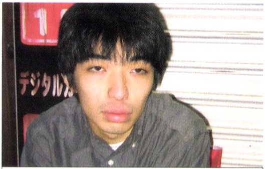
PSP MANIA

SONY'S HANDHELD—AND HANDHELD GAMES—HIT JAPAN

THE LAUNCH

The entire first floor of the Shibuya Tsutaya was converted into a PSP sales center, but small outposts of PSPdom (like this display picture here) still dotted other areas of the store.

Nearly 300 people had lined up outside Yodobashi Camera in Shinjuku by 11:00 p.m. the night before the launch. Most had brought along food, games, and friends to stay busy.

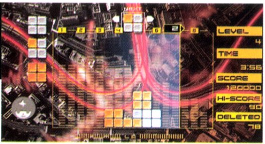


You'd think the first person in line for the PSP would be happier...maybe the long hours were starting to get to him. Arai-san had been waiting for almost 12 hours at this point.

These three queued up early to get their hands on—OH MY GOD WHAT'S THAT RIGHT THERE? An unspecified "contact" had lent them a PSP to pass the time, but they still needed to purchase their own.

By 5:00 a.m. the morning of the launch, the line outside Yodobashi Camera was over 1,200 people long and wrapped around the store four or five times. Numbers were handed out to make sure no one cut in.

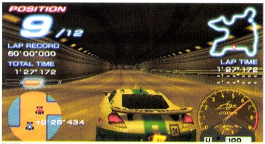
THE GAMES



LUMINES

SOUND+VISION

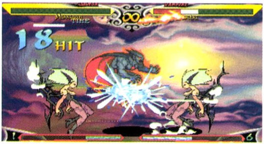
Producer Tetsuya Mizuguchi's *Rez* combines music and shooting into a cohesive experience; his *Lumines* hopes to do the same for puzzle games. Players rotate square pieces to match like-colored blocks on the widescreen playfield. The twist is that matched blocks don't disappear immediately, but only after the music-tied "timeline" sweeps over them from left to right. Create as many combos as possible within a single pass of the timeline to rack up a high score. With only two colors of blocks, a spacious playfield, and a ceaselessly moving timeline, *Lumines* is a puzzle game that rewards fast thinking and instinctive play over careful, long-term planning. A pounding techno soundtrack produced by house artist Mondo Grosso drives the action, while visual "skins" keep the player's eyeballs overstimulated. Each skin is closely tied to a song on the soundtrack, animating and shimmering in time with the tunage. Groovy.



RIDGE RACERS

DRIVING INNOVATION

Sony launches and *Ridge Racer* games go together like Lamborghinis and radar detectors, which is fitting: *Ridge Racers* is so fun and polished that it feels like it's borderline illegal. A compilation of the first five games, *Ridge Racers* has the best tracks (over 20), the best cars (six classes, nine cars per class, and 25 colors per car), the best music (30 tracks: 12 new, 12 old, 6 remixed), even the best race queen (the pure-hearted Reiko Nagase, not those skanks who replaced her). A nitro meter that fills when you are drifting is a new feature, but it fits in fairly seamlessly with *Ridge*'s arcade-style gameplay. A world tours mode challenges players to complete dozens of increasingly difficult two or three track "tours." Doing so unlocks additional cars and tracks for use in the single race and time attack modes. If "racing alone" sounds (oxy)moronic, then *Ridge Racers*' wireless races for up to eight players should satisfy.



VAMPIRE CHRONICLE: THE CHAOS TOWER

MONSTROUS FUN

In the past, Capcom's been rightfully accused of over-milking its fighting franchises. Fortunately, for the PSP launch, the company gave some love to an underexposed gem: the horror-themed *Darkstalkers* series. *Vampire Chronicle* crams characters from *Vampire* (Darkstalkers), *Vampire Hunter* (NightWarriors), and *Vampire Savior* into a single monster mash-up. Each of the 18 characters can be played as a "vampire," "hunter," or "savior" type for different balance, special moves, super moves, guards, and reversals. The arcade mode offers a classic fighting challenge, but the 100-floor titular tower has a few new tricks. Guide a well-balanced team of three characters through the tower's deadly floors. Some floors' fights have special restrictions, such as "no punches," while others have special victory conditions, such as "KO within 10 seconds." Fight skillfully to skip floors and unlock alternate pathways.

Dawn comes to Shibuya, but the line still stands. At T-minus 30 minutes until the scheduled 7:00 a.m. launch, the line outside Bic Camera stretched to nearly 300 people.

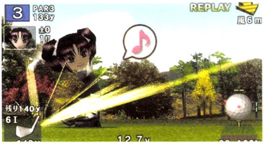
The line outside Bic Camera wound its way up to the third floor, where a makeshift row of registers had been set up on the staircase landing. The sign warns customers of a strict one-PSP-per-person policy.

Giant signs outside of Tsutaya ensured everyone knew Sony's PlayStation Portable was now on sale. Later that morning, other signs would let everyone know it was now sold out.

The sun's not fully up, but PSP sales are well underway. Sales began at 7:00 a.m. Most line-waiters were taken care of by 8:30 a.m., and the few unclaimed units were snatched up in another hour or two.

After carpet bombing the nation with print and television advertising, Sony put some demo kiosks in stores to convince anyone still on the fence. Really, though, these are just four more units they could've sold.

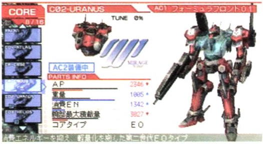
Preordered your PSP? Doesn't matter! Get in line! Even gamers lucky enough to have a valid preorder slip had to wait in line for an hour or more once sales finally began.



MINNA NO GOLF (Everybody's Golf/Hot Shots Golf)

SWINGERS

Somewhat surprisingly, the top-selling PSP game at launch wasn't *Ridge Racers*, but Sony's little golf game that could. *Minna no Golf* is massively successful in Japan, and the PSP version is smart not to change the gameplay from that of its big brother: Choose your club, line up your shot, tap the meter, and swing. Fortunately, golf and the PSP are a perfect fit; the portable format is ideal for playing through a few holes when you have some free moments. In addition to standard 18-hole golf, a new putt golf mode lets you compete exclusively on the short green. For the first time, players can customize an avatar's hair, clothes, and various accessories; not only is this fun, it helps differentiate your character during an eight-player wireless match. Gorgeous 3D graphics and simple, addictive gameplay make this the ideal game for casual gamers, hardcore golf fans, and—fittingly enough—everybody in between.



ARMORED CORE: FORMULA FRONT

ARMORED BORE

Armored Core: Formula Front is an...application with which players customize a mech down to the most ridiculous detail: head, arms, legs, weapons, radiator. Players then distribute tuning points to parts, allocate intelligence points to A.I. behaviors, and set sliders controlling battle behavior (aggressive/defensive, near/far attacks, safety/risk). Next, players paint their mechs, design logos, and name the finished creations—then watch noninteractive three-minute battles of their mechs fighting other mechs. "Players" do not, in fact, ever play at all.

Why do people like giant robot games? Because they get to blow things up. At no point in *Armored Core: Formula Front* is the player in any danger of controlling a giant robot, let alone blowing something up. You might as well buy a statistics workbook and doodle Gundams in the margins. It would be far less expensive and every bit as fun. « Andrew Vestal

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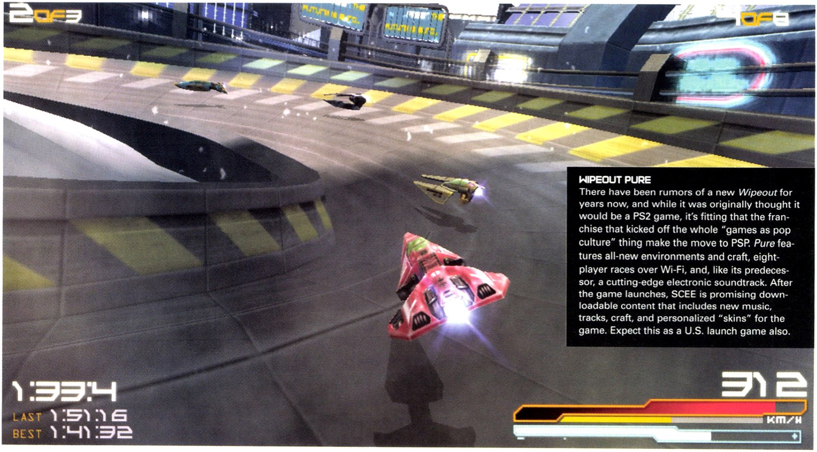
PSP IN EUROPE

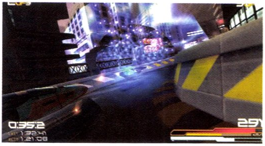
LAUNCH GAMES FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE POND

Sony Computer Entertainment Europe announced its lineup of "spring" titles (note, not necessarily "launch" titles) just before the holidays, and there are some welcome and familiar faces in the mix. Although not confirmed yet, the European launch is expected to be March 25, leading to speculation that the U.S. release will be the Tuesday of that week, March 22. Check www.1UP.com on January 5 for confirmation.



WIPEOUT PURE

There have been rumors of a new *Wipeout* for years now, and while it was originally thought it would be a PS2 game, it's fitting that the franchise that kicked off the whole "games as pop culture" thing make the move to PSP. *Pure* features all-new environments and craft, eight-player races over Wi-Fi, and, like its predecessor, a cutting-edge electronic soundtrack. After the game launches, SCEE is promising downloadable content that includes new music, tracks, craft, and personalized "skins" for the game. Expect this as a U.S. launch game also.



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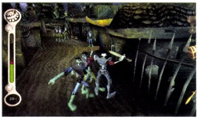
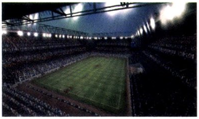


MEDIEVIL

MediEvil games were moderately successful on PS1 in the United States; this iteration takes the stylized undeadness of the original games and spices it up with lots of minigames and multiplayer modes. "We've looked to incorporate Wi-Fi modes in two ways," producer Piers Jackson tells us. "All minigames offer head-to-head challenge modes. *MediEvil* will also feature a checkpoint-style race mode using the game's levels where one player's success penalizes the other player's time, offering an interesting tactical challenge."



FOOTBALL

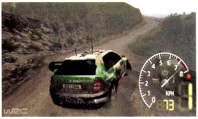
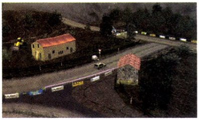
Expected to surface as *This Is Football* when it's eventually released, it's a safe bet this will turn up as *MLS Soccer* in the United States. There will be 150 different teams available, with both domestic and international games featured, and the Wi-Fi mode will be unique in that it features something called the Advanced User Alert System for sniffing out other users within range so you can issue challenges. A fairly frivolous feature by all accounts, but proof that the technology works—good news for fans of head-to-head play.

FORMULA ONE

Another series that pushed the PS1 to its limits, Travellers Tales' *Formula One* reminds of us being blown away by the old *Psygnosis* game. The new game features all 18 official circuits and 10 official teams, 20 cars with performance stats based on their historical season performances, and five unlockable classic bonus cars. Expect arcade-focused gameplay with seven modes, including quick race, world championship, head to head, and eliminator championship. Expect a U.S. release later in 2005.

FIRED UP

Developed by the guys who made *Hardware*, this is the first huge, open-environment-style game for the PSP. Essentially a vehicle combat game in the vein of *Twisted Metal*, *Fired Up* features the expected array of zany characters and ludicrous weaponry and promises to be one you can gain satisfaction from whether you've got three minutes or three hours. Twelve maps and eight different game modes are open for multiplayer, including deathmatch, capture the flag, king of the hill, and bomb the base.

WRC

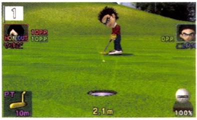
"*WRC* will utilize the same licensed cars, drivers, and tracks as the PS2 version, but the emphasis is more about [being] easily accessible," the guys at Travellers Tales, who are picking up the baton from Evolution Studios, tell us. "It's more about pick-up-and-play gameplay with more arcade-style against-the-clock challenges." Expect 30 fully deformable cars, including Evolution and Extreme spec cars, plus all 17 official 2004 FIA-registered rally drivers from the six official manufacturers. No word yet on a U.S. release, but it would be a shame if there weren't one.

APE ACADEMY

It wouldn't be a new system without a new *Ape Escape* variant. *Ape Academy* features 45 crazy minigames, with just about every style of gameplay you could possibly think of represented in some form or another. As with everything else on the system, it packs in Wi-Fi and party modes, as well as something that is starting to turn up in a few games that originate in Japan—two players on one system. We're still not convinced about this notion of doubling up on Sony's plank, but we're prepared to at least try it before we write it off.

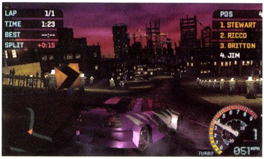
RIDGE RACER

In keeping with the "just like when the PS1 launched" vibe, *Ridge Racer* is a familiar classic that's been reinvented for PSP. Everything about the game has been enhanced since the last console version, and the handheld game is like a "greatest hits" of previous *Ridge Racer* features. There are 24 different tracks to play, which is more than any previous game in the series, and you'll find familiar favorites like Crimsonrock Pass, Greenpeak Highlands, and Seaside Route 765. Expect to see *Ridge Racer* in the United States on launch day.



EVERYBODY'S GOLF

When this hits the States it will be called *Hot Shots Golf*, and the handheld variant features six brand-new courses along with all the familiar characters that have appeared in the four previous versions of the game. As with all other PSP games, it will feature Wi-Fi multiplayer games for up to eight players, with plenty of options for setting up tournaments or one-on-one games.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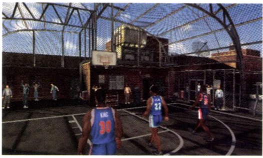

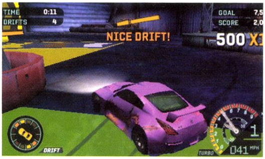
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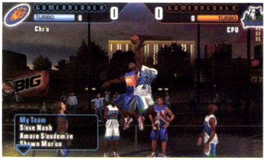
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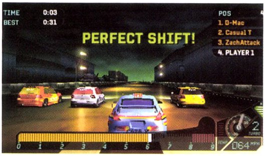
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EA SPORTS

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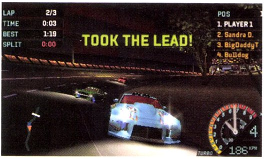
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EA SPORTS
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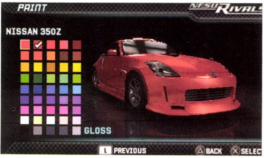
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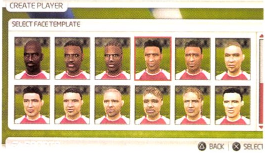
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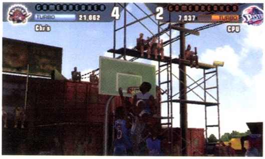
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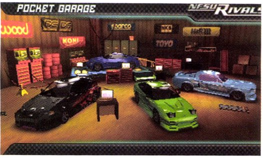
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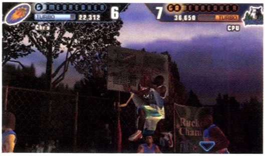
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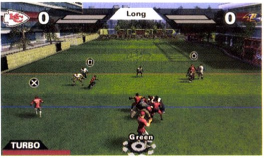
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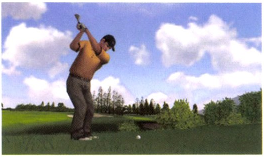

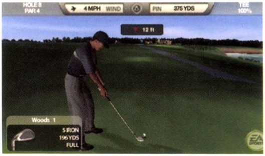
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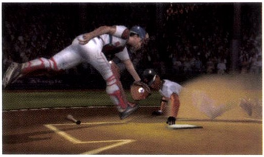

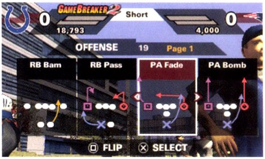
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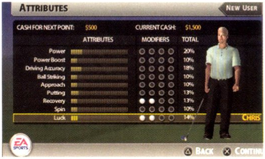

ATTRIBUTES

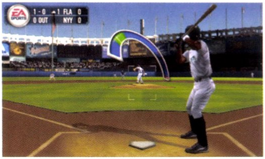
NEW USER

CASH FOR NEXT POINT: $500 CURRENT CASH: $1,500

	ATTRIBUTES	MODIFIERS	TOTAL
Power		○○○○	20%
Power Boost		○○○○	10%
Driving Accuracy		○○○○	18%
Ball Striking		○○○○	10%
Approach		○○○○	10%
Putting		○○○○	13%
Recovery		●●○○	13%
Spin		○○○○	10%
Luck		●●○○	14%

CHRIS

BACK CONTINU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CHALLENGE EVERYWHERE

EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON TIME WITH ELECTRONIC ARTS' PSP LINEUP

Need for Speed Underground Rivals, FIFA Soccer, MVP Baseball, NBA Street Remix, NFL Street 2 Unleashed, Tiger Woods PGA Tour—if you haven't guessed by now, Electronic Arts wants to support the PSP in a serious way. Nearly every one of the company's major franchises is hitting Sony's new platform in an effort to push the PSP as a handheld that appeals to not only the Game Boy crowd but also an entirely new audience not normally associated with gaming. But can the PSP really do for the handheld market what the original PlayStation did for consoles? EA hopes so, and if the dedication to its PSP lineup is any indication of how serious EA is about making this happen, then there's a pretty good chance it will.

GOAL
SCORE
1,000
500
NICE DRIFT!
TIME 0:29
DRIFTS 2
TURBO
DRIFT
PSP

INTELLIGENT DESIGN

A GLIMPSE INTO THE MIND OF TEAM FUSION

The PSP's power gives many developers an opportunity to simply port their console games over to a handheld. And while the novelty of playing these games on the go is alluring, that soon dissipates—straight ports usually don't take full advantage of what portable gaming is all about.

Of course, you might look at Electronic Arts' PSP lineup and say, "Wait a second, these are all PS2 games." Indeed, even hearing how the company views the PSP would make you think that the system is simply another avenue to make loads of cash. "The PSP is exciting to us because our properties would be on a platform that makes sense for us," says Warren Wall, executive producer and leader of EA's Team Fusion. "We're more about the 18- to 34-year-old consumers, so this is our chance [to get a foothold] in that market."

But marketing mumbo jumbo aside, Electronic Arts gets it. It understands what it has to do to make its PSP lineup a success: truly harness what the PSP has to offer as a handheld gaming platform. If there's any doubt about how serious the company is, take into account the fact that an entire development team was created to focus solely on PSP development. The members of this team, aptly named Team Fusion, are responsible for bringing EA's biggest games to the PSP. Again, the games could've just as easily been ported as is, with some adjustments made for the PSP's glorious screen, but for Team Fusion, that's not enough. "These are not ports," Wall adds. "That's not what we're after. We want something that's compelling and new, but we do have great franchises and we want the experiences they provide on the PSP."

The first step? See and feel what the console versions of these games are like on the small screen. "When we first thought of moving over the console versions, we put them on a small screen and ran tests," says Wall. "As an example, we tried to get the console version of *Need for Speed* on the small screen and you couldn't play it. You can't see where you're going, and the cameras are off. We had to rethink a lot of things, like lighting, controls, and [other technical elements]."

All sorts of minor adjustments have been made to accommodate the PSP's screen, beyond the change in aspect ratio from 4:3 to 16:9. Some games feature contrast enhancements to bring attention to a particular part of the environment, while other games make use of color coding to give an almost subliminal indication of what you should be doing. Actually, there are a lot of strong, vibrant colors used in general, making sure that you see every last detail on the screen. It may not seem like much initially, but attention to minor details like these is another sign of how far Team Fusion is willing to go to make these games work on the PSP.

Other additions are far less cosmetic and more content oriented. Oftentimes, the best handheld games are ones that can be enjoyed in short bursts as well as for extended periods of time, or at least as long as the PSP battery lasts. "We thought about how consumers are going to use this device," says Wall. "When you play at home, you usually do so for about 30 minutes to one hour. You want the long experience when you have the time, but when you're out on the road, you want that shorter

POWER
HOLD
START

MARKETING MUMBO JUMBO ASIDE, ELECTRONIC ARTS GETS IT. IT UNDERSTANDS WHAT IT HAS TO DO TO MAKE ITS PSP LINEUP A SUCCESS.

WHAT'S GOING TO CHANGE?

As with any system, the PSP will evolve over time, and it's already clear that one of the most important points in the coming years will be the battery. Sony has committed huge resources to battery R&D, and we can expect huge advances in consumption rates.

experience. If you have a class or you're in between meetings, you want to play that quick game." Creating a long experience obviously isn't the issue, since EA's PSP lineup has console roots, but what will Team Fusion do to cater to the short-attention-span crowd or the PSP owner who has only a few minutes to pick up the device and play?

The answer comes in two forms: quicksaves and minigames. If you're in the middle of playing a game and need to shut off the PSP, you can save and pick it up right where you left off. It'll undoubtedly be one of the more useful features for PSP users that want a taste of the main game but simply don't have the time to commit. The minigames, though, are part of what makes EA's lineup so much more robust than most of the other games that have been announced. Each of the six games has a collection of minigames, some of which have been lifted from their console counterparts but the vast majority of them are unique to the PSP.

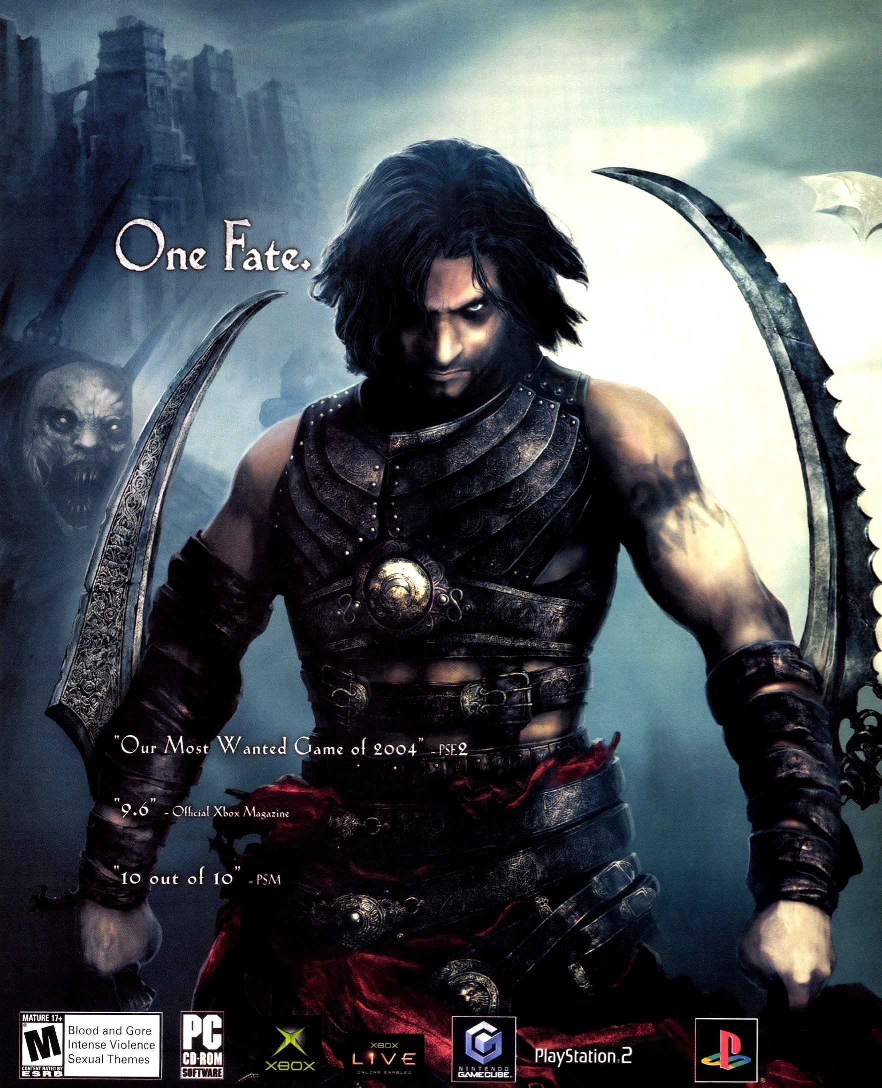
More important, these minigames are also tied into another big part of Team Fusion's design philosophy that includes Wi-Fi and party play modes. Party play is a mode in which players pass the PSP back and forth in an effort to top each other's scores. Seems like such a simple idea, but it's just another part of what will make these games stand out. "Looking at the competition, there are some games that are console quality in terms of performance or visuals," says David McCarthy, a producer at EA Canada. "There will be some that offer unique [portable gaming] experiences, but we sincerely doubt there will be a double combination—the console quality and the unique experience."

POWER PLAY

EXTENDING YOUR BATTERY LIFE

Unfortunately, with all the PSP has to offer, there's still the issue of battery life, something that's very important with handhelds. The official line from Sony is that the battery can last about four hours while playing games, which is somewhat low compared to other handhelds, but there are a lot of things Team Fusion is doing to help extend the battery life as much as possible. For one thing, the PSP has plenty of RAM, so it's not as necessary to stream data off the UMD disc for a game like *Need for Speed Underground Rivals,* because entire levels are loaded straight into memory. Since the disc isn't constantly spinning to load data, it saves the battery from working overtime. "We didn't have to make any compromises," says McCarthy. "The big challenge was for games where the worlds are streaming off the disc, but if we were to do that on the PSP it would probably kill the battery in an hour. Some audio samples are still streamed off the disc, but they're low impact."

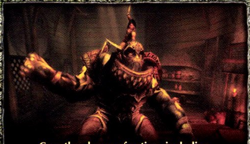
Additionally, Wi-Fi capabilities normally can suck a battery dry in no time, especially if the device is constantly searching for other devices. The only time these EA games send out a Wi-Fi ping is when you're in the lobby of a multiplayer game waiting for other players to join. "The Wi-Fi mode is designed in such a way that you're not constantly broadcasting," McCarthy adds. "We've found a way to easily connect people without killing the battery." Fortunately, the PSP development environment includes emulation for battery consumption, so developers can see which features are putting the most pressure on the PSP's precious power source.


One Fate.
"Our Most Wanted Game of 2004" - PSE2
"9.6" - Official Xbox Magazine
"10 out of 10" - PSM
MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Sexual Themes
PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE
XBOX
XBOX LIVE ONLINE ENABLED
NINTENDO GAMECUBE
PlayStation 2

PRINCE of PERSIA
WARRIOR WITHIN
One Million Ways to Defy It.

2003's Game of the Year* returns to further push the boundaries of gaming

Utilize over 60 weapons, projectiles, environments, and enemies with the Free-Form Fighting system



Countless hours of action, including soul-shattering boss battles

Even when you've been sentenced to death by a demonic incarnation of Fate, you still have choices. And with the power to develop your own combat style using countless weapons, environmental objects, and whatever enemy crosses your path, there's no telling what your warrior within will unleash next. You can't run from Fate. But with this much freedom, you can stop it dead in its tracks.

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princeofpersiagame.com

UBISOFT

*Game of the Year: Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences, *U.S. Official PlayStation Magazine*, *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, *Official Xbox Magazine* (Staff Pick), *PSE2*

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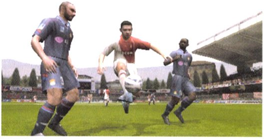
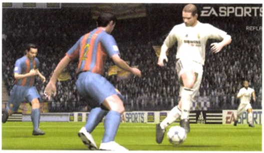
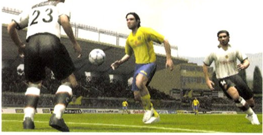






FIFA SOCCER

FOOTY ON THE GO

***FIFA Soccer* easily takes the prize** for having the most content out of any of EA's PSP games. Even at such an early stage of development (it had been running on actual PSP hardware for only a week and a half when we saw it), it's amazing to see how much the team has packed into the game. "We have to provide what *FIFA* fans expect," says EA Producer David McCarthy. "That means an incredible amount of licensed content, so there are around 350 teams and all the stadiums you find in the console version." On top of that, *FIFA* has full commentary and all of the various stadium noises and chants you'd expect out of a soccer game.

However, not all aspects of the console versions of *FIFA* have been retained in the PSP game. One problem that crept up is button mapping—the PSP simply doesn't have as many buttons as the DualShock 2 controller, nor does it have a second analog stick. So the team tried its best to get all of *FIFA*'s gameplay features mapped to the PSP configuration. "There are some challenges remapping these games to a less-functional controller," McCarthy adds. "We lose an analog stick and two shoulder buttons, but we've tried to retain some of the core stuff, like first-touch control. We just have to give a different spin on how we do it."

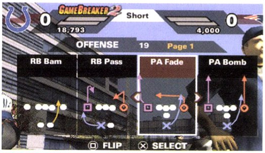
Everything else is still there in terms of features, including a full season option, but there's a bit of a twist. The season mode actually has a midseason feature. All of the midseason injuries and statistics are taken into account, so you don't have to worry about updating rosters or simulating a chunk of the season just to catch up with what's going on in the actual sport.

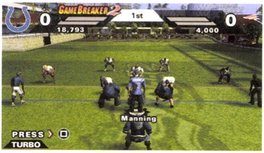
FANCY A GAME?

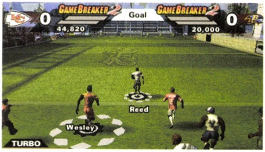
If playing a full or abbreviated season isn't what you're really looking for, then you can take up one of several challenges in the appropriately named challenge mode. There are essentially three different types of challenges to choose from—comeback, rout, and custom. Comeback puts you into a position in which your team is down with a limited amount of time left, so you have to score as quickly as possible to win. Rout is like comeback in reverse—the idea is to score as many goals as possible—and custom challenges let you set your own parameters. It's also worth noting that some of these challenges are historically based, so you can actually relive some of the greatest moments in soccer history.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

There's no real point in having a portable soccer game if you can't play through an entire match at your discretion. Who knows? You could be walking down the street playing a match against Arsenal when pigeons start attacking your face—the last thing you want to do is turn off your PSP and lose whatever progress you made. To counteract this, *FIFA* has a quicksave that lets you save at any point. When you come back to the game, a clock will count down from five seconds and actually show what was going on in the game during that time, and then you take over the game; it's a little like a "rolling start" in a game like *Burnout*.







NFL STREET 2 UNLEASHED

TAKE IT ALL THE WAY—ON A CAR TRIP

Out of all the games we saw, *NFL Street 2 Unleashed* probably needs the most work. This isn't because it looks horrible or plays poorly—it has to do with the game being a little too much like the PS2 version at this point. The fact that the camera is pulled so far out from the action makes it difficult to actually see players and pinpoint where the ball is. However, there's a pretty simple reason why *Unleashed* is in its current state. "We didn't even know that we were going to do this until April or May," says Jason Vandiver, producer at Tiburon, the same development studio behind the console version of the game. "We were already well into the development of *Street 2* for the consoles, and we don't have the heritage of a *Tiger Woods* and some of the others. We don't have a whole lot of history to pull from, so we basically went with concurrent development."

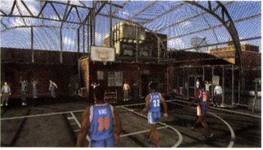
To be fair, it's not exactly the same game. *NFL Street 2 Unleashed* falls under the same design guidelines as the other EA PSP games, so it does have content unique to the handheld, such as minigame party play and Wi-Fi multiplayer support. Actually, there are more minigame modes in *Unleashed* than in the PS2 *NFL Street 2*. "We were lucky because we came up with 15 to 20 minigames for *NFL Street 2*," says Vandiver. "That was the big focus, because we already had a solid football game, but we wanted to change the core mechanics and then focus on a different way to play football to attract people who wouldn't normally play the game." Some of these minigames aren't quite as good as others at this point and still need some serious tweaks. For example, when playing jump ball challenge, it's really hard to time your catch because the ball is so tiny on the screen. Likewise, in crush the carrier, sometimes you can't tell who has the ball for the same reason.

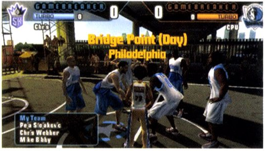
Of the minigame options that are exclusive to the PSP, the style standoff is by far the most bizarre. It places two players in the middle of the field in a *You Got Served*–style face-off to determine who has the best taunt moves, which are executed by pressing a series of *Dance Dance Revolution* button combinations. Yeah, we didn't really know what to make of it either, but it could be entertaining in multiplayer.

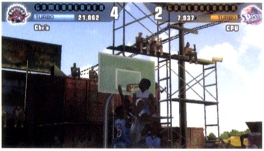
As far as pure gameplay enhancements go, *Unleashed* has all the features that the PS2 *Street 2* has, including the new wall jump that helps you evade defenders or make some wicked passes down the field. The playbook has also been significantly expanded since the original *NFL Street* game, so you have plenty more running, passing, and special plays to select in your journey to the goal line.

DOUBLE DUTY

Working on a single game is hard enough, especially when it has as many features as *Street*, but as you can imagine, working on two is even tougher. "The biggest challenge we had was concurrent development," says Vandiver. "It was exceptionally difficult to develop the PSP version at the same time as the PS2 version because that means we have to wait on assets and a lot of other stuff from the console team."







NBA STREET REMIX

STREET BASKETBALL ANYTIME, ANYWHERE

Arcade-style games are a no-brainer for handheld platforms, so it isn't really surprising that EA chose *NBA Street* as one of the games to help kick off the PSP launch. The game is perfect for what the PSP needs, a fast-paced sports game that has broad appeal and really makes use of what the hardware has to offer on a technical level. Plus, it's one of the few ways you'll get to see the Indiana Pacers' Ron Artest in action, outside of promoting a rap album no one cares about.

Anyway, most of what you'll see in *NBA Street Remix* is based off of *NBA Street Vol. 2* instead of *NBA Street V3*. "We couldn't bring some things from *Street V3* over to the PSP version," says Joel Manners, a producer at EA Canada. "*Street V3* has the dual-analog dunk system, so the main reason we went with the *Vol. 2* controls is because all of the tricks can be mapped to the analog stick and two shoulder buttons." As such, it plays similarly to *NBA Street Vol. 2*, which isn't a bad thing by any means, but you shouldn't expect some sort of huge new innovation in the gameplay.

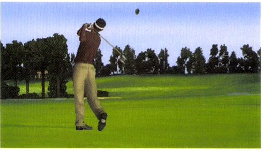
Where *Remix* does excel beyond its counterparts is in the exclusive features department. There are two insanely fun minigame-style modes available for single-player, multiplayer, and party play. The first, called shot-blocker, was integrated into the game because if you don't love swatting a player's shot out of the air, then you hate freedom.

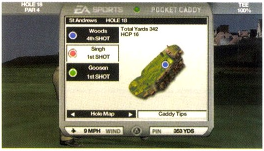
The idea behind it is pretty simple—just try to block shots coming from the three players out on the perimeter. Points are awarded based on how close you are to the player, so if you're standing near the rim like some kind of chump, then you get fewer points for blocking the shot. Conversely, if you're right up in a player's face and block the shot, then you get more points. Plus, if you grab the ball out of the air or swat one of the ABA-style balls, you get even more points. If you choose to play this mode via Wi-Fi, then two players will be on the screen at once and the action gets even more intense.

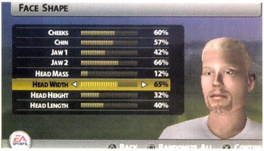
The other mode, arcade shootout, is essentially a videogame representation of those basketball rims you find in arcades—you know, the ones in which you throw up as many shots as possible in a limited amount of time. Only in the *NBA Street Remix* rendition of it, there are three hoops with varying point values. The trick is that these hoops sometimes move back and forth, but this gives you the opportunity to sink multiple baskets at once. You can also make even more points by rebounding and making a basket or by knocking another player's shot out of the rim in multiplayer.

REIGN SUPREME

As in the console versions of *NBA Street*, the king of the courts mode in the PSP game features full 3-on-3 action. Sometimes you get to play against NBA stars both past and present, but other teams will have completely new characters made specifically for the PSP version. You can also create your own character for this mode and build his stats and moves so that he can hang with the rest of the ballers out on the court. Be prepared to see a few bricked dunks here and there in the early going.






FACE SHAPE

Cheeks 60%
Chin 57%
Jaw 1 42%
Jaw 2 66%
Head Mass 12%
Head Width 65%
Head Height 32%
Head Length 40%

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR

NOW YOU DON'T HAVE TO LUG AROUND THOSE CLUBS

Tiger Woods PGA Tour is almost a perfect fit for the PSP. All of the 20 professional golfers and each of the 12 courses are faithfully reproduced on the PSP screen. The analog swing structure is not only present, but it feels better than its console counterpart since the analog nub does a better job than the analog stick of mimicking an actual golf swing because of the way it snaps back into place. Still, at its core, it's the *Tiger Woods* golf game that everyone knows and loves. "We have to be true to the series in terms of the type of A.I. and controls," McCarthy says. "We have to bring all the rich worlds, too, and one of the challenges was loading all of the courses into RAM. Normally, they'd be streamed off the disc. Also, the mix of players and courses is unique for PSP. While the stuff we have in the game is from the series, it's almost like a remix."

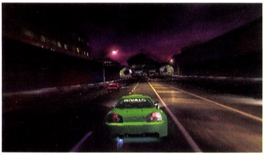
The game is much like *Rivals* in that respect because Tiger's courses also received minor visual changes. The contrast between the green and different parts of the course has been adjusted so that it's easier to differentiate between them. But in reality, it doesn't seem all that necessary since the game includes a cool feature called the pocket caddy, which pretty much does exactly what it says. At various points on a hole, the pocket caddy feature can be used to give you some tips on how to play a specific shot, so if you're in the bunker but close to the hole, it will give you information on how to make the best shot possible. Likewise, when you're putting, it'll recommend where you should aim the putt, allowing you to adjust your swing via a grid that is displayed over the hole. Actually, much of what made the console version of *Tiger Woods* accessible to the nonhardcore golf enthusiast plays a part in the PSP game. You still get a general indication of how well you're swinging the clubs by looking at the trail behind the ball. If it's a white streak, then you've hit the ball dead center, but if you slice or hook it, you get a different-colored trail.

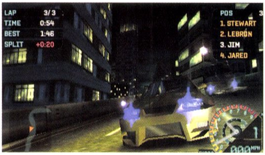
PUT ON YOUR GAME FACE

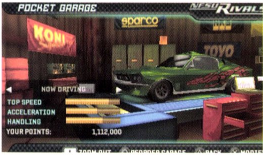
OK, so it's not quite as fully featured as the console version's game face found in *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005*, but the game face feature included in the PSP version offers a pretty staggering amount of customization. You can shape just about every contour of your face, add facial hair, change your eyes, mess around with hair color, or add a few pounds.

BINGO, BANGO, BONGO

If you play golf, you're probably familiar with this phrase, but for those who don't know, it's basically a very simplified golf scoring system. The first player to hit a ball onto the green earns a point, which is the bingo part of the equation. The player that hits the ball closest to the flag after everyone reaches the green gets a point—bango. Lastly, the player who gets the ball into the hole first is also awarded a point, and this would be the bongo. As you might guess, the player with the most points wins. This is just one of the multiplayer games; you can also participate in standard rounds, quick skins matches, and driving competitions.







NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND RIVALS

FAST AND FURIOUS PORTABLE ACTION

Out of all the games, Team Fusion's "no compromises" attitude towards PSP games seems most apparent with *Need for Speed Underground Rivals*. Just about everything that's made the console versions of this series so popular remains intact in the PSP game. Of course, there have been some changes made to not only help ease a newcomer's experience with the game, but to also make sure that the experience of playing the game on the PSP is just as fun and exciting as playing one of its console counterparts. "The idea is to focus on usability on the road, so even the way the colors of the buildings contrast with that of the road is meant to guide you," says David McCarthy, producer at EA Canada. "But at the same time, we don't really dumb it down to the point that you lose what's important to the *Underground* series, so you'll notice the shiny, slick roads are here, along with the full reflections, the motion blur, and the sparks. There are no compromises."

The development team on *Rivals* even went so far as to enlist some help from the console *Need for Speed* teams to make sure that *Rivals* looks and feels like an *Underground* game. "To stay authentic to it, we would involve [the console team] on an art direction level, an engineering level, and even on a design level to make sure we're staying true to the franchise," McCarthy says. "We also wanted to leverage their expertise. You know Habib Zaragarpour is the visual master on the *Underground* series. He worked on *The Perfect Storm* and the pod race in *Episode I*—he sat down with our game to make sure we were getting the sense of speed right in terms of the blur, the road textures, and everything that molds into that visual style."

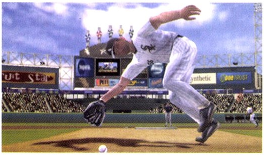
Indeed, *Rivals* has come a long way visually since the Tokyo Game Show, but so has the gameplay. Even the controls have been significantly tweaked in just a few months, making it much easier to maneuver around the track using the analog nub on the PSP. It makes sense since the original analog code for the PS2 version of *Underground* was still in place in the Tokyo Game Show version of the game. "We wanted to make the analog stick sensitive, but not so much that you're whipping the car around," McCarthy says. "When we went to Tokyo, we were on our initial port, so we still had the console settings in there, and that really doesn't work since the two are different."

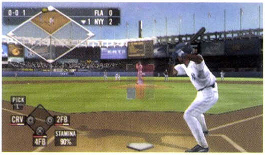
PARTY ON

Along with the standard racing, *Need for Speed Underground Rivals* offers a number of fun alternate driving modes that support multiplayer through Wi-Fi and on the same PSP unit through party play. One of the games is called drift attack, and its main goal is to successfully perform several drifts around a relatively small enclosed course. You receive points by entering into the drift and holding it through the turn (by repeatedly tapping the emergency break) before moving on to the next. It takes a bit of skill to nail every single drift, but it's quite fun once you get the hang of it. Another mode is the nitrous run, in which you basically just get from point A to point B as fast as you can, which is perfect for *Burnout* fans. There's also a rally relay mode that should sufficiently spark your competitive spirit.

CUSTOM CARS

The customization element of the *Underground* series remains fully intact in *Rivals*. By playing through the game's main career mode and earning points on the 10 circuits designed for PSP, you can unlock all sorts of external and internal upgrades for your vehicle, ranging from fins and different types of hoods to all other sorts of goodies associated with tuner culture, like nitrous, vinyls, decals, and fancy pearlescent paint jobs. There's a nice pocket garage option that lets you see all of your cars in a single area, so you can look at individual cars and decide which ones are in need of some changes. Also, when you're participating in a Wi-Fi multiplayer race, you'll be able to see your opponent's car and all of its cool modifications, unless it's some kind of modded Charger, which would totally not be cool at all. Unfortunately, you can't actually trade cars with other *Rivals* players, but it seems to be one of the features that EA would consider in future *Underground* releases, once Sony actually provides development support for that sort of thing.





MVP BASEBALL

BUY ME SOME PEANUTS AND PSPs

Aside from *FIFA Soccer*, *MVP Baseball* will be the only sports simulation available from EA at the PSP's launch, and if you hadn't guessed by now, it will offer many of the same types of features found in the other EA games. Obviously, it'll have many of the features found in *MVP Baseball 2004*, including the pure swing system, which takes into account several factors when you're standing at the plate, including bat positioning, the pitch, the ability of the player, and the type of swing used. There will also be plenty of options for pitchers and overall defensive play.

Currently, there are plans to include a home-run shoot-out and a pitcher showdown, along with the standard exhibition and full season modes. In addition to all that, there will be an assortment of minigames (of course!) to help fill out the party play and Wi-Fi multiplayer options. These games will be based on both batting and pitching. Unfortunately, we didn't get to see any of these modes in action because they are still being developed, but if the screens are anything to go by, they should be a great way for baseball fans to get their fix out on the road.

KEEPING TRAX

PSP TAKES ON THE iPOD

As you may already know, almost all of Electronic Arts' games have soundtracks filled to the brim with licensed music. The same holds true for these PSP games, but the soundtrack is much more than just something that plays in the background while you navigate through menus. Now, you can hop into the Pocket Trax portion of any game in the EA PSP launch lineup and listen to the soundtrack separate from the game. In some cases, there will even be videos to accompany the tracks, but those that don't have videos will have a cool little visualization feature similar to something you might see in software like iTunes or Winamp. Even if you don't particularly care for the music, it's a pretty interesting feature, and other publishers should make note of it.

PSP CROSSFIRE

DISCUSSING ELECTRONIC ARTS AND THE PSP LAUNCH

GIANCARLO VARANINI So this was your first time getting your hands on a PSP. What do you think?

JOHN DAVISON The screen immediately made an impression. The biggest problem with handhelds is that you rarely feel fully immersed in the game, because you have all of these distractions around you and you're hunched over peering at that tiny little screen. The PSP is different, and I found with *Need for Speed* especially that I was sucked in the same way I am with the PS2 version.

GV Agreed. Even though I had already seen it at Tokyo Game Show, I'm still amazed by the thing. The screen is so incredibly clear and the rest of the PSP just looks so slick that I don't even realize that I'm using a handheld, really. But I still have some issues with the analog nub. I mean, it's not horrible or anything, but there is a learning curve involved, as was shown by my awesome ability to run into walls in *Rivals*. *Tiger Woods* is a different story. The nub feels like it was made for that game.

JD The problem with the nub isn't so much a game design issue as it is simply the thing itself. The fact that it slides rather than tilts comes as a complete surprise when you first use it, and it almost feels spring-loaded as it snaps back to its center point. It feels like it was designed as a navigation aid rather than a game controller. It's perfect for snapping through menus, but it's all wrong for games. My biggest issue is that it feels like it's in the wrong place. For action games like *Rivals*, it's too uncomfortable, because it forces you to hold the PSP differently, and you find you prod it rather than take advantage of the analog function. If that's the way it forces you to play, you're better off using the D-pad, which is in exactly the right place and feels wonderful. You're right about *Tiger*, though. The nub makes it easier to make shots than a traditional stick.

After seeing what's coming to PSP early on and playing with the thing for a while, I have a prediction for how things will go down. When it ships, there'll be talk of limited supplies and I have a feeling it will be a similar predicament to the PS2 launch. We'll see people bitching about battery life on message boards, because it's an easy target for that, and we'll see comments about the initial lineup of games, which while broad, is superficially quite stale. I think more cynical gamers will criticize the thing for being a device on which everyone trots out all the old chestnuts. When you hear the list of EA games, your first reaction is "Well, of course that's what they're going to do. The only thing missing is *Madden*." Where is *Madden*, by the way?

GV I think we can almost guarantee there will be a shortage in North America, even if it's not entirely real. It'll be free advertising for Sony when you see all these mainstream news reports about the PSP supply not meeting demand, creating the "Wow, if it's so popular, maybe I should buy one" sentiment amongst consumers who either don't know much about it or are on the fence about buying one. It worked for Tickle Me Elmo, so why not the PSP? But yeah, I'm sure we'll hear some valid complaints about battery life. I'm just worried that there's going to be some kind of massive defect with the unit, whether it's dead pixels on the screen or something about the UMD drives.

As for *Madden*, I think the answer is that the timing is just off. Releasing a pro-football game in March probably doesn't make much sense to them since the average football fan expects a new *Madden* to hit stores in the late summer or early fall. Of course, that isn't stopping them from releasing *NFL Street*. However, *Street* is kind of a different beast since it hasn't quite latched on to *Madden*'s success yet. Still, as impressed as I was with all of these games, especially *NBA Street Remix*, I feel like there's something missing.

JD The thing that always shocks me is how lousy Japanese system launches are. If you look back, the original PS1 was plagued by limited numbers, and there was only one game available at first. Then the PS2 had all sorts of problems. Sony couldn't make the units fast enough, they couldn't make the chips fast enough, and the launch lineup was pathetic. Now with the PSP, it seems to be happening again. Only 260,000 units hit stores in Japan in December, and of course there was talk of dud screens and broken nubs. The biggest concern was games again, though. All those poor people that lined up in the cold didn't have much to choose from, and we saw a lot of people buying systems just for the hell of it and then sitting tight to wait for games to come out.

The U.S. launch seems like it will be quite different. Manufacturing should be up to speed, and it's starting to look like there will be a lot of games available. There are more than 20 already on our radar for the March "launch window" [including these six from EA, plus the games already confirmed for Europe—see page 56], and we know that several publishers are working on stuff, but they won't be making any announcements until CES in Vegas January 5. I think the launch here will be much more spectacular. I'm sure there will be shortages, just like with PS2, but I bet that by the summer it'll be easier to get a PSP.

THE SCREEN IMMEDIATELY MADE AN IMPRESSION.

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By now, we're sure you really, really want one. We can maybe help you out there. Head to 1UP this month, and you can enter our PSP sweepstakes to win a PSP plus the six Electronic Arts games featured here. You'll find all the rules and entry details at pspopm.1UP.com.

CAN'T BEAT 'EM? BUY 'EM

ELECTRONIC ARTS SIGNS EXCLUSIVE AGREEMENT WITH NFL

In a surprising turn of events for the videogame sports world, Electronic Arts has signed separate five-year contracts with both the National Football League and its players' association for exclusive use of professional football teams, stadiums, and players in simulation, arcade-style, or manager-type games for PC, consoles, and handhelds. The deal also gives Electronic Arts full access to content from NFL Films and the recently launched NFL Network. "We are pleased to expand our agreement with Electronic Arts, the leading videogame manufacturer and a valued NFL partner," said Paul Tagliabue, NFL commissioner. "We look forward to working with EA to continue to enhance the quality of NFL videogames that our fans have enjoyed for many years."

Technically, the deal doesn't cover cell phones or other sorts of wireless devices, but that doesn't do much for companies that previously held the license. It's also possible for each company to continue producing football games, but it will be without the official NFL license, which was a common practice in the 8-bit and 16-bit console era when publishers didn't have enough money to fork over to the league. That wouldn't exactly be practical in today's market, where even having an NFL license doesn't guarantee you a solid amount of sales.

It seems as though Visual Concepts and Take-Two aren't all that concerned with the license, since the *2K* series did little to affect the company's bottom line, but they're still disappointed in the decision. "While sports games in general are an important part of Take-Two's product diversification strategy, the licensed NFL game we distributed on behalf of Sega this year was not a material contributor to our profitability to date, nor was it expected to be a meaningful contributor in the upcoming year. We remain committed to continued diversification of our product portfolio, including sports," said a Take-Two Interactive representative. "We believe that the decisions of the National Football League and Players Inc. to grant an exclusive license for videogames do a tremendous disservice to the consumers and sports fans whose funds ultimately support the NFL, by limiting their choices, curbing creativity, and almost certainly leading to higher game prices." «

DATA STREAM

NEWS IN BRIEF

HAPPY BIRTHDAY PLAYSTATION

The original PlayStation is officially 10 years old in Japan. The system launched in December of 1994 for the oh-so-low price of 39,800 yen ($380). To date, the PS1 has sold well over 20 million units in Japan.

GO PSP

The PSP had a successful launch in Japan. Consumers bought around 86 percent of the 200,000 units available on launch day. The best-selling game at launch was *Hot Shots Golf*, with around 68,000 units sold, followed by *Ridge Racers*, which sold around 57,000 units.

NO ONLINE FOR KASAI

Online play won't be a part of the follow-up to *Mark of Kri*. *Rise of the Kasai* was originally designed to feature two-player online cooperative play, but that feature has been thrown in the trash so that the development team can focus on the single-player experience.

FULL SPECTRUM PS2

THQ plans to bring *Full Spectrum Warrior* to the PS2 early in 2005. The squad-based tactical shooter lets players issue commands to individual members of an elite combat unit. *Full Spectrum Warrior* is also being used as a training tool for the U.S. Army.

JAPANTOWN

THE CULTURAL SWAY OF DRAGON QUEST

ANDREW VESTAL

teaches English in the land of our friends to the East and has been fully indoctrinated into the cult of *Dragon Quest*.

On Saturday, November 27, Square Enix released the inevitable best-selling PlayStation 2 game of all time: *Dragon Quest VIII*. *Dragon Quest VII*, despite serious issues, still easily snagged the PS1's all-time top sales slot. *Dragon Quest VIII*, with gorgeous graphics and easier accessibility, is selling even faster. More than 2 million units have been sold through to customers in the first two days, with well over 3 million expected by the end of the year.

In Japan, *Dragon Quest* is more than just a popular videogame—it's a cultural phenomenon. The game sells beyond the PlayStation 2's core audience of die-hard RPG fans—the release of a *Dragon Quest* game spurs console purchases by nostalgic middle-aged salarymen, die-hard fans of character designer Akira Toriyama, and that special breed of myopic Japanese gamer to whom "videogames" means infrequent *Dragon Quest* releases punctuated by long bouts of nothingness. After eight games and 20 years, nearly every aspect of *Dragon Quest* is now steeped in nostalgia and codified by tradition. The launch-day festivities are no exception; nowadays, weeks of anticipation, Saturday release dates, and long lines of queued gamers are an inseparable part of what makes *Dragon Quest* unique.

I chose to celebrate *Dragon Quest VIII*'s 7 a.m. launch at the large Tsutaya electronics store in Shibuya—the one overlooking the world's busiest intersection. Yodobashi Camera in Shinjuku is slightly more famous for long gaming lines, but the folks at Tsutaya had promised a special "countdown event" to those who lined up. The most die-hard hardcore gamers started waiting around 11 p.m. the night before, but the majority woke up at the crack of predawn and first-trained it over to the launch site. By the time the countdown event began at 6:30 a.m., more than 300 gamers had lined up outside the store.

IT'S MORE THAN A POPULAR GAME—IT'S A CULTURAL PHENOMENON.

The entire first floor of Tsutaya had been cleared of its regular DVD stock and converted into a makeshift *Dragon Quest* shrine. Copies of the game and strategy guides were stacked to the ceiling, along with Hori's blue slime controller and a special commemorative issue of *Famitsu* ("Famitsu for Adults"). A special stage in the middle of the floor stood in front of looping trailers on hanging video screens.

At 6:50 a.m., Square Enix President Yoichi Wada took the stage, thanked the crowd, and introduced a very special guest: game designer and "father of *Dragon Quest*" Yuji Horii. This was a treat; Horii, though not quite a Salinger-esque recluse, rarely appears in public these days. He thanked the crowd and reassured everyone that, despite the new *Dragon Quest*'s graphical brilliance, the gameplay and spirit of the series were "completely unchanged."

Horii led the crowd in a countdown of the final 10 seconds. The clock hit 7 a.m., smoke was fired off, and the *Dragon Quest* fanfare blared over the store's PA system. The first person in line, a smiling 24-year-old man, picked up his copy of the game—*Dragon Quest VIII* was officially on sale.

That afternoon, a friend asked me why I had woken up at 5 a.m. to wait in line for a game I had securely preordered. Why not just sleep in and pick it up that afternoon? I stared back in disbelief. It had never even occurred to me to sleep in. Living in Japan, awash in these cultural forces, I had never even felt like I had a choice in the matter. I mean…it's *Dragon Quest*. «

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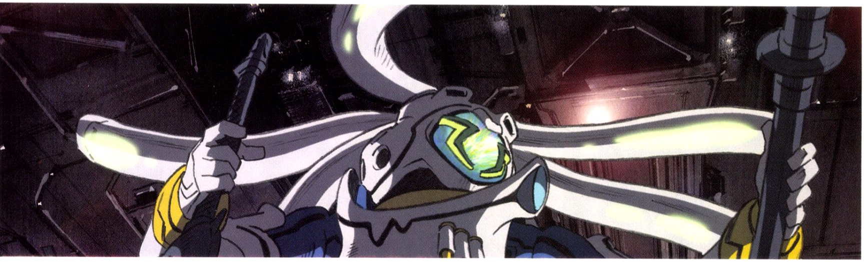

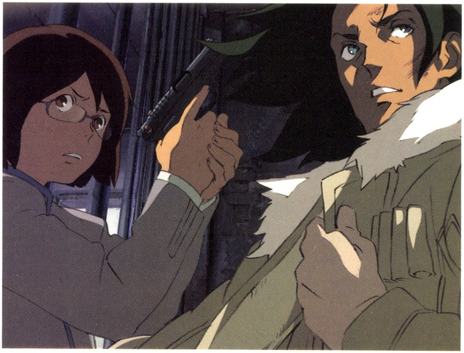

THE DARK FUTURE
In the days ahead, you can look forward to controlling your own giant robot (or overman), just like Gainer Sanga and Gain Bijou (at left) do in the anime epic *Overman King Gainer*.

ANIMANIA

SOMEDAY ROBOTS WILL RULE THE WORLD

HAIL TO THE KING

Gundam creator Tomino Yoshiyuki hit the skids for a while with shows like *Brain Powered*, but his latest giant-robot opus looks like a winner. *Overman King Gainer*, due to kick off its six-volume run through Bandai February 22, blends an over-the-top style and bizarrely fluid mecha designs to create an aggressive break from giant-robot convention. Anything with a theme sequence where the robots do the monkey (to the tune of a mightily thundering classic-rock opening) is worth at least a first look, and what we've seen beyond that encourages a second and third look as well.

ONCE UPON A TIME...

Most *OPM* readers might cringe at the thought of owning a series in which ballet is the main theme, but regardless of your phobias involving men in tights, ADV's January 25 release of *Princess Tutu* is a near-required purchase. It's not another teen-angst show and it's not another magical-girl knockoff. It may start out looking like a little of both, but it gradually develops into an intense and enveloping fairy tale, both charming and ever so slightly grim. It's a great one for all ages (and all genders, too, if you're not overcompensating for something).

SPECIAL RECIPE

It's been pushed back a bit, just like the game was, but fans of *Fullmetal Alchemist* can look forward to checking out the show on DVD starting February 8. That's when the first of a whopping 13 volumes drops onto store shelves, not long after the PlayStation 2 game comes out. The adventures of metal-limbed chemical magician Edward Elric are still just about the hottest thing going in Japan, so check it out on the Cartoon Network to see what the fuss is about.

BOXING DAY

Every month another wave of cheap rereleases seems to be hitting the market. January 11, its a pair of killer box-set deals from Geneon—*Serial Experiments Lain* joins the "Signature Series" at a price of $59.99 for the whole shebang, while *Legend of Black Heaven* gets a second shot at a $49.98 price point. Both of those are great deals, and if you missed *Black Heaven* in its original run, the superior story of aging rock-n-rollers confronting alien evil with guitar-powered space weapons is something absolutely not to be missed.

SAGACIOUS

Namco mentioned a *Xenosaga* TV series ages ago, but it's taken till now for things to finally start happening. The first volume of Monolith Soft's planned six-part RPG epic debuts in animated form on Japanese television in January, retelling the adventures of Shion Uzuki, her android associate KOS-MOS, and the rest of the *Episode I* cast. Script supervision is the responsibility of Yuichiro Takeda, veteran of some fine sci-fi shows like *Infinite Ryvius* and *Banner of the Stars*, so it should be fine space-opera fun for all, without even the pretext of gameplay to get in the way.

OTAKU NO 2K4

As the new season progresses in Japan, some more standout series are popping up in addition to the shows spotlighted last month. One of the best of the new year is *Genshiken*, which chronicles the adventures of a college anime-manga-game club in the eternal quest to achieve ever more rarefied heights of geekdom. It's a pleasantly human take on the subject—instead of diving into outright parody like *Gainaxs Otaku no Video*, the series slyly points out that we all have our own obsessions, whether or not we wear them so proudly. Watch out for an American release, which will hopefully arrive sometime later in the year. « *Dave Smith*

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BY THE NUMBERS

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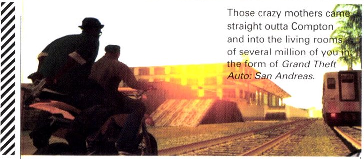
SALES, RENTALS, TRENDS, AND ODDITIES—THE STATS THAT SHAPE YOUR VIDEOGAME WORLD



Those crazy mothers came straight outta Compton and into the living rooms of several million of you in the form of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas.*

PS2 TOP 20 SALES

	Title (Publisher)	Score
1	Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (Rockstar)	●●●●●
2	Need for Speed Underground 2 (EA Games)	●●●●●
3	Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater (Konami)	●●●●●
4	Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 3 (Atari)	●●●●
5	Madden NFL 2005 (EA Sports)	●●●●◐
6	Call of Duty: Finest Hour (Activision)	●●●●
7	Jak 3 (Sony CEA)	●●●●◐
8	WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw (THQ)	●●●◐
9	Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal (Sony CEA)	●●●●●
10	NBA Live 2005 (EA Sports)	●●●●
11	Jak II (Sony CEA)	●●●◐
12	ESPN NBA 2K5 (ESPN Videogames)	●●●●
13	Killzone (Sony CEA)	●●●●
14	ESPN College Hoops 2K5 (ESPN Videogames)	●●●◐
15	Tony Hawk's Underground 2 (Activision)	●●●●◐
16	NCAA March Madness 2005 (EA Sports)	●●●◐
17	The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age (EA Games)	●●
18	Prince of Persia: Warrior Within (Ubisoft)	●●●●
19	Ace Combat 5: The Unsung War (Namco)	●●●●
20	ATV Offroad Fury 3 (Sony CEA)	●●●●

PS1 TOP 10 SALES

1	Final Fantasy VII	Square Enix
2	Dragon Ball GT	Bandai
3	Tomorrow Never Dies	EA Games
4	HP & the Chamber of Secrets	EA Games
5	Final Fantasy Anthology	Square Enix
6	Final Fantasy Chronicles	Square Enix
7	Namco Museum Vol. 3	Namco
8	NFL GameDay 2004	Sony CEA
9	Final Fantasy Origins	Square Enix
10	Final Fantasy IX	Square Enix

JAPAN'S TOP 10 PS2 GAMES

1	Dragon Quest 8	Square Enix
2	Ace Combat 5: The Unsung War	Namco
3	Momotaro Dentetsu USA	Hudson
4	Magna Carta	Banpresto
5	Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal	Sony
6	Slotter Up Core 5: Lupin III	Sony
7	J. League Winning Eleven 8	Konami
8	Shining Tears	Sega
9	Pop'n Music 10	Konami
10	Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life	MMV

TOP 10 RENTALS

1	GTA: San Andreas (PS2)	Rockstar
2	Halo 2 (XB)	Microsoft
3	NFS Underground 2 (PS2)	EA Games
4	Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 3 (PS2)	Atari
5	Call of Duty: Finest Hour (PS2)	Activision
6	MGS3: Snake Eater (PS2)	Konami
7	WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw (PS2)	THQ
8	Killzone (PS2)	Sony CEA
9	Call of Duty: Finest Hour (XB)	Activision
10	NFS Underground 2 (XB)	EA Games

TOP 10 SALES, ALL SYSTEMS

1	Halo 2 (XB)	Microsoft
2	GTA: San Andreas (PS2)	Rockstar
3	NFS Underground 2 (PS2)	EA Games
4	MGS3: Snake Eater (PS2)	Konami
5	World of WarCraft (PC)	Vivendi Universal
6	NFS Underground 2 (XB)	EA Games
7	Super Mario Brothers 64 (DS)	Nintendo
8	Half-Life 2 (PC)	Vivendi Universal
9	Metroid Prime 2 (GC)	Nintendo
10	Ghost Recon 2 (XB)	Ubisoft

Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 3

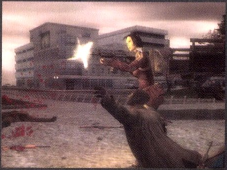
WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw

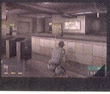
ESPN College Hoops 2K5

Prince of Persia: Warrior Within

Source: EB Games, November 2004. Numbers reflect the sales at EB and its affiliated outlets and don't include other retail outlets. That's probably why you'll never see *Deer Hunter* crack the top 10. Japan's top 10 and the top 10 rentals come from other sources. Game descriptions written by the *OPM* staff. Portability sources: Motorola, PSAI.org, and Guinness World Records.

TREND SPOTTER





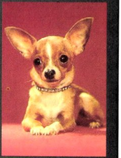
KOREA

The land of kimchi and Hyundais has been popping up in a lot of games as of late—at last check, we've seen it in *Ghost Recon 2, Mercenaries, SOCOM II,* and *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory.* Ah, friendly PS2: You let us navigate around the world without making us leave the comfort of our living room.

PORTABILITY

28

The weight, in ounces, of the world's first commercially available cell phone.

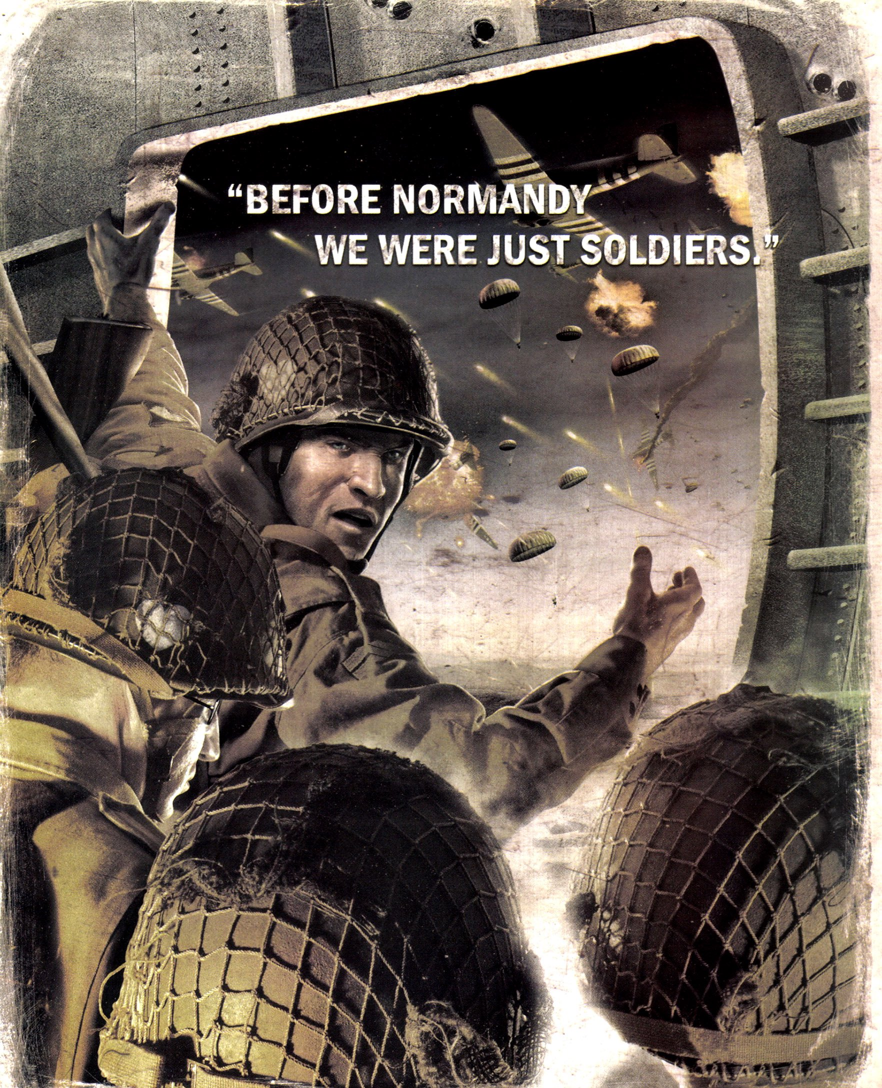


7.4

The length, in inches, of the world's smallest dog, Danka Kordak Slovakia of Slovakia.

1.4

The number, in millions, of portable toilets estimated to be in use throughout the world.


"BEFORE NORMANDY
WE WERE JUST SOLDIERS."

"BUT EIGHT DAYS IN HELL
MADE US BROTHERS."
- SGT. MATT BAKER
CAREN

RATING PENDING
RP
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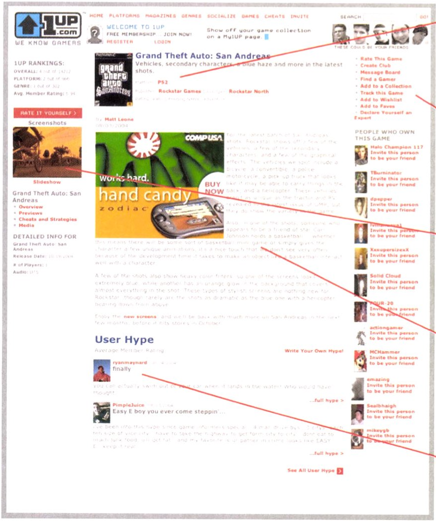

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Screenshots

Slideshow

Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas

- Overview
- Previews
- Cheats and Strategies
- Media

DETAILED INFO FOR

Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas

Release Date:

# of Players:

Audio:

Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas

Vehicles, secondary characters, a blue haze and more in the latest shots.

PS2

Rockstar Games Rockstar North

By Matt Leone

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Average Member Rating

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ryanmaynard

finally

...full hype >

PimpleJuice

Easy E boy you ever come steppin'...

...full hype >

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TBurninator Invite this person to be your friend

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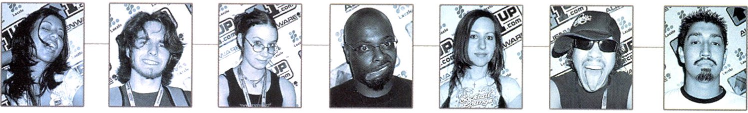

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REVIEWS

078>

OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

[★]

GAME OF THE MONTH

MERCENARIES

THE FIRST GREAT GAME OF 2K5

RATING KEY

Octagons. Stomps. Ocs. Blargs. Call our rating symbols what you will—just know that any game that receives five of 'em is something truly special that deserves a spot in your collection. On the other hand, a 2.5 is merely mediocre. And a 0.5? Well...at least they're fun to rip apart.

[⬣⬣⬣⬣⬣]

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OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE
GAME OF THE MONTH

MERCENARIES

LUCASARTS SURPRISES US WITH THE FIRST AWESOME GAME OF THE YEAR

If you've been intrigued by the preview coverage that's appeared over the past few months for this game, you'd be forgiven for thinking that *Mercenaries* is quite a complicated game. The premise of you being a private military operative playing different factions against each other appears to be both ambitious and daring, but in practice it's no more complex than the gang interplay in *Vice City*. As a mercenary, you're free to accept missions from the Allies, the South Koreans (who are being aided by a CIA operative), the Chinese (who have more sinister designs on the region), and the Russian Mafia (who can very handily lay their hands on just about any hardware you could want, for a price), and the challenge is to ingratiate yourself sufficiently with each group so that they will divulge intelligence that will lead you to the 52 North Korean bad guys (represented by a deck of cards) for whom you'll get paid a bounty. The hunt for the 52 provides the necessary linear strand through the emergent, free-roaming shenanigans and also provides an old-school "boss battle" mechanism not present in other sandboxy games. Once you get sufficient intelligence on the ace cards, who are the real nasty guys, you're whisked off to new closed environments that aren't accessible from the main map. Busting the aces is usually a convoluted affair that involves clearing out areas, blowing up buildings, jacking numerous vehicles, and eventually running after the guys and kicking them in the shins before calling in the cavalry. When you go after the first of these foes, the ace of clubs, you'll notice a dramatic jump in gameplay difficulty. The game is quite tough throughout (there is, after all, a full-on war going on at all times), but things crank up exponentially for the four most important missions, and unless you're particularly patient, they may prove so tough as to prompt you to give up. There's nothing more frustrating than blowing through a 20-minute mission, loading your charge onto the helicopter so you can claim your bounty, and getting picked off from half a mile away by some goon with a rocket launcher. The result of this is that you have to go all the way back to the beginning again, and chances are, some of the situations you took advantage of last time will have changed. It's frustrating—believe me.

A lazy description of the game is that it's "a bit like *Grand Theft Auto*,"

BE A MERCENARY

A WALKTHROUGH OF THIS MONTH'S DEMO

The level in the demo features Matthias Nilsson, who is arguably the toughest to work with of the three playable characters in the game. He's fast and agile, but he doesn't take many hits before he goes down, so be careful as you move through the mission.

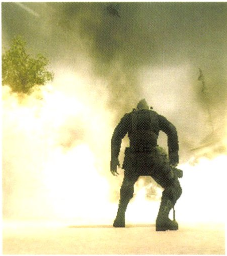
The objective is to take out the queen of hearts, Colonel Jong Namgung, and destroy his chemical weapons plant in a North Korean village. SAM sites, which need to be destroyed, defend the site, and the whole complex sits behind a heavily fortified gate, which you need to take out before you do anything. Fortunately, you have access to a wide variety of awesome toys to play around with. Start by calling for carpet bombing, which you can access with the D-pad. Select Carpet Bomb from the pop-up menu and then tap R1 to switch to the satellite-targeting mode. Once you've lined up on the gate, hold down R1 until the little bar fills up—your buddies will then come in and treat you to an impressive explosive moment. Watch in awe as the wall of fire takes down everything in its path and opens up the level so you can cruise in.

As you move forward, look for an assault rifle with a green circle around it on the ground; switch out your carbine for it by holding the Triangle button. Pretty much everyone you shoot will drop one of these guns, so having one equipped will give you access to a near-limitless supply of ammo. Your eventual goal is the yellow marker on the map (in the top right), but you need to take out the green markers, too (the SAM sites). The sites are fairly easy to destroy; they take a couple of rockets from the RPG (push R2 to switch between your two primary weapons), a block of C4 (accessed using the Support menu on the D-pad), or a well-placed shot from some heavy artillery.

As you run around blowing stuff up, you'll eventually stumble upon a variety of vehicles. To jack one, stand in the green circle near the vehicle you want (the jeeps have multiple circles—at the sides for driving and at the back for using the gun) and hold the Triangle button. Tanks are particularly fun. Walk up to the barrel and hold the Triangle button while standing in the circle on the ground.

The quickest way to destroy the chemical plant is by using an air strike from the Support menu, but that doesn't mean you have to do it this way. A tank can take out a building, as can a helicopter, if you find one with rockets. Try to improvise and see what you can come up with.

Once the plant is destroyed, look for the queen of hearts marker on the map and go after him. If you kill him, you only get half of the bounty, so ideally, you want to capture him alive.



PLAY IT!

Chase after the queen of hearts in our exclusive playable demo on the DVD this month. Blow lots of stuff up!

and while this is true up to a point, if you've played a lot of *San Andreas*, you'll have to reprogram your brain for this. Combat is much more satisfying than the gunplay in Los Santos, and the physics model for the vehicles is much less twitchy. Flying helicopters is infinitely easier, and there are many more loud explosions to enjoy. On the downside, the environment in *Mercenaries* is both smaller and less forgiving than what you may have gotten used to recently. Something simple, like being able to get out of a vehicle that has fallen into a lake or river, is sorely missed when it's not there. My biggest gripe with *Mercenaries*, though, is the tedious trundling around the environment. Once you're engaged in a mission, like the one that you'll find on our demo disc this month, the action is pretty compact and well contained, but the parts between objectives can seem a bit directionless. It's not a major gripe, but it definitely messes with the otherwise perfectly adequate pacing.

Check out our disc this month if you really want to talk yourself into buying this. I'm sure its stunning presentation and ambitious structure will surprise you. I hope they do a sequel. « *John Davison*

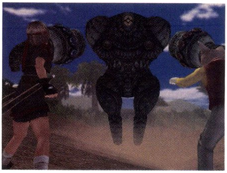
ACES Emergent gameplay that doesn't feature gangs, hip-hop, or cops in any way; it has absolutely gorgeous visuals, too, and a wonderful orchestral soundtrack

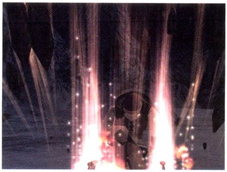
JOKER Some pacing issues; lacks things you expect post-*San Andreas*

Pub. LucasArts **Dev.** Pandemic **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

RATING ●●●●◐

Special
Guard





SUIKODEN IV

108 DORKS TO MANAGE

A while back, we pointed out that the *Suikoden* franchise is quite an underrated one. The *Final Fantasy* franchise is fine and dandy, but *Suikoden* is no slouch in the RPG genre, either. It boasts interesting stories, solid combat, the coolness of letting you own an entire castle, and its signature "108 stars of destiny," which means you have a list of over a hundred people to choose from to make your six-person party. *Suikoden IV* has most of these elements, but the changing marketplace, as well as the game's execution of its own features, end up relegating it to the status of a lesser franchise.

As slow and convoluted as *Suikoden III*'s story is, it ultimately becomes quite rewarding. Sadly, *Suikoden IV* doesn't improve upon *III*'s weaknesses—it merely regresses into a much simpler game. Worst yet, it's even simpler than *Suikoden II*, which is a PS1 game that came out in 1998. For example, you can only use four characters in battle—which instantly limits the possibilities for cool combo moves significantly compared to the number available in previous games. *Suikoden III*'s story is heavily dipped in political intrigue; *Suikoden IV*'s is a simple "misunderstood boy must grapple with the rune of punishment" affair. Ship combat is now a simplistic rock-paper-scissors arrangement, bereft of any sort of complexity or difficulty. Finally, the sailing parts of the game are pretty much like those in *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, but a lot slower and less fun.

That's not to say that *Suikoden IV* is a bad game, it's just that it's so very blah. Sure, the graphics are decent and the voice acting is passable. While the combat is simpler than in previous versions, it's not broken or anything, and combat combos are still pretty cool. And the game doesn't have obvious glitches or missteps. It just does its job of being an RPG, no more, no less. In any other year, *Suikoden IV* might have had a chance to make a name for itself. Now, it's just an average RPG that happens to have 108 people in it. « *Thierry Nguyen*

RUNE OF COOLNESS It's still got 108 people, and it still plays like *Suikoden*, somewhat
RUNE OF PUNISHMENT It plays like a simplified *Suikoden* and is so very average

Pub. Konami **Dev.** Konami **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING ●●●○○

LOOK KIDS! A BOOK! WOW!

Hey kids, go to Amazon.com and type in "Water Margins" as the search term. That's the popular title for the original 14th-century Chinese novel that inspired the *Suikoden* franchise. The story details the gathering of over 100 special folk to overthrow an empire. Hmm!

PlayStation

PLAY IT!

Want to try your hand at alchemy? Then pop in this month's demo disc to give *Fullmetal Alchemy* a test run.

FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST

TURNING LEAD INTO COPPER

Creating a game based on any sort of animated license must be incredibly easy. One can merely take a previously existing game, substitute licensed characters in place of the originals, get some actors to phone in some scenes, and voilà, a mediocre game that snares the fans who buy it without much consideration.

Thankfully, *Fullmetal Alchemist* aims higher than that. The game plot is basically a side story to the anime series, in which the alchemist Edward and his brother Alphonse are checking out a town filled with chimeras (yeah, that old chestnut). So at first it resembles another crappy game where you do a lot of jumping and hitting, except it's filled with smiling anime kids. But then the game introduces alchemy: a magic system that not only allows special attacks, but transforms (well, the game and the show use the word "transmute") normal objects into gameplay ones. A mere rock could be transmuted to become a spear, or a barrel transmuted into a cannon. Most of the time you get a weapon, but occasionally, you'll get some puzzle-related item like a bouncy spring, or simply odd items like a clone of yourself or a duck-shaped wind-sucking machine.

Alphonse
WHAT is going on out there!?
It's chimeras as far as the eye can see!
Smoly hokes!

Ed & Al
Sh–she'd kill us...!

Besides controlling Edward, you also have limited command over his armored brother, Alphonse. He generally wanders around and smacks baddies up, but you can specifically tell him to charge enemies, come help you, or pick up items. Unfortunately, that's about it, and as lovable and burly as Alphonse is, he's a bit difficult to use in precise ways.

Alas, as neat as alchemy and Alphonse are, the rest of the game ends up being fairly by-the-numbers. Places to jump to, wacky enemies to fight, and anime cutscenes to watch are all what you would expect, no more, no less. It's by no means a spectacular game, but then again, it did make me want to watch the show, so it's done its job. « *Thierry Nguyen*

GOLD Cool alchemy-transformation gameplay; decent voices, graphics, and combat
LEAD A.I. is a bit awkward to use, and at the end of the day, it's another random license-based game

Pub. Square Enix **Dev.** Racjin **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING ●●●○○

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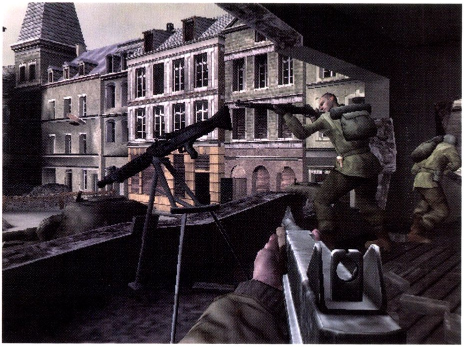
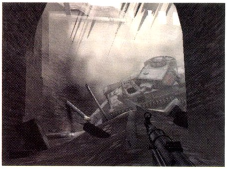
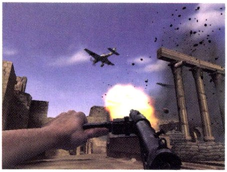
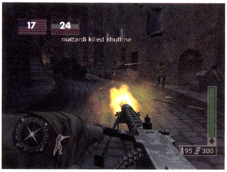
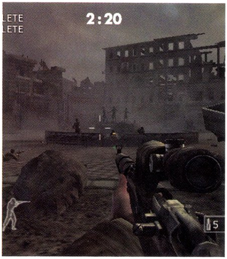










HEAD TO HEAD

Call of Duty's online game types are disappointingly basic given the variety of the single-player campaign, consisting only of deathmatch, team deathmatch, capture the flag, and search and destroy. The mechanics can feel a bit iffy, giving shoot-outs some pretty unpredictable results. In spite of all this, though, playing online is a blast, mainly because of the awesome level design. Not only are environments realistic and incredibly detailed, they're also riddled with prime hiding spots, alternate paths, and nooks and crannies that help make each round a new experience—plus they're huge. *Call of Duty* won't be the Next Big Online Game, mainly due to the questionable hit dynamics, but it's still a nice diversion from the single-player campaign.

CALL OF DUTY

NOT THE FINEST, BUT STILL PRETTY DAMN GOOD

What do you get when a huge chunk of the original *Medal of Honor* team jumps ship from EA and decides to create its own World War II first-person shooter? Well, you get something an awful lot like *Medal of Honor*—which should come as a surprise to absolutely no one.

Call of Duty: Finest Hour shares a great deal with its spiritual predecessor, both good and bad. Epic, cinematic presentation? Check! Stirring orchestral music? Check! Scripted segments designed to make the game feel broader than it is? Check! Cookie-cutter enemies who aren't terribly smart? Check! Painstakingly detailed environments modeled after real, historical locations? You get the idea.

There are two major areas in which *Call of Duty* surpasses *Medal of Honor*. The first is teamwork. While you can't actually order your fellow combatants around, the game does a decent job of making you feel like a member of a squad of reasonably intelligent soldiers. There were plenty of times during the game when I thought I was about to get my ass nailed to the wall, only to be saved by one of my compatriots at the last minute. Your teammates' A.I. is far from perfect—there were plenty of other times when I wanted to scream at them for walking into my line of fire, for example—but they do a generally competent job of working with you.

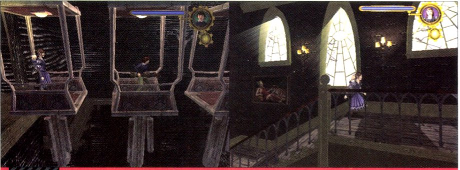
The other aspect of *Call of Duty* that's better is its variety. You'll drive a tank, man an antiaircraft gun, ride shotgun in a jeep careening across the desert, and even engage in limited demolitions—sometimes several different gameplay styles are in one mission. Of course, there are also plenty of opportunities to hunker down and plow through wave after wave of Nazis—perhaps a few too many opportunities. The only times the game ever got really annoying were when it seemed the Motherland was offering up an endless supply of Nazi cannon fodder. Enemies never respawn, but a few spots felt monotonous due to the unnaturally long stream of bad guys that seemed to pour out of some mysterious, hidden side hatch.

But this complaint is an exception; generally, the game is quite good, with an excellent pacing that intersperses long, tense segments with periods of absolute mayhem. Aside from the low-poly character models and some pretty nasty collision glitching, it looks great, too. Combine all this with a superlative soundtrack, and you've got a surprisingly stirring, entertaining experience. « *Joe Rybicki*

PROS Nice sense of teamwork, great presentation overall, solid difficulty, good variety, fun, simple online play
CONS Some monotonous segments, some graphical glitches, enemies (and occasionally teammates) not the brightest bulbs on the string

Pub. Activision **Dev.** Spark **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●●○]



LEMONY SNICKET'S

A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

Despite working with what must have been a smaller production budget for a similar game, Adrenium has managed to release something every bit as good as EA's *Harry Potter* titles—a phrase that here means "still not very good."

Like many games of this sort, *Lemony Snicket* is hampered by a failure of imagination. The format of running around levels to collect objects has proven its interchangeability: You could plug in any movie license (and many developers do) and it would work just as well. There aren't many types of enemies in the game, and when you *do* meet new varieties, they tend to behave exactly the same way as the old ones.

The other problem with the game is that it's a sterner baby-sitter than any of the guardians assigned to the Baudelaire orphans. The objects that you run around collecting are components Violet needs for her inventions, which usually give you some new ability to get past an obstacle. But even though components are always clearly marked with a little sparkly aura, the game won't let you pick them up until the event flag that indicates where they're needed has been triggered. The actual inventing minigame, if you can call it that, also features unnecessary hand-holding, using an "X" to mark the correct spot to put each component on the workbench.

Lemony Snicket gets better toward the end, but even the best parts are borrowed from other games. When even a game's manual asks, "Wouldn't you rather play something else?" consider taking the hint. « *Nich Maragos*

VERDICT Nothing here that you haven't seen before, just a new cast of characters

Pub. Activision **Dev.** Adrenium **ESRB** E **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●○○○]

SOURPUSS

Lemony Snicket is the pseudonym of Daniel Handler, who informed his agent that the only way he would write children's books is if nothing happy ever happened in them. Aside from the *Lemony Snicket* books, he has also written two very adult books for, well, adults. Nothing much happy happens in either of them either.

HOT WHEELS: STUNT TRACK CHALLENGE

LITTLE CARS FOR LITTLE GAMERS

The best part of playing with Hot Wheels is experimenting with track pieces to see just how wild you can make the track and still have the cars be able to complete it. So when I started playing *Hot Wheels: Stunt Track Challenge*, it was a big disappointment to discover that there is no way for you to build your own tracks, or even see a broad overview of craziness.

Instead, this is a basic kids' racing game. The meat of the game is contained in the game show mode: Work your way through challenges in six different episodes to get all the content unlocked. Challenges vary—sometimes you're racing, but more often you're involved in some sort of jump challenge. None of it's very difficult; A.I. is pretty much nonexistent, and races are so scripted that you'll notice the same cars hitting the same obstacles each time.

Arcade mode lets you do quick races or compete head-to-head against another player, either in races or in a stunt challenge. There's also an online mode which lets you race up to five other players. There are only three different categories of cars (sports, muscle, and heavy), and within the categories there isn't a lot of difference between the models and how they race. You can change car colors and earn new decals, but customization stops there.

It's pretty elementary and it won't take anyone very long, but at $20 it's a good starter option for the young race fans in your life, who should get quite a few hours of enjoyment from it. « *Dana Jongewaard*

VEREDICT: Not a lot of depth, but a good starter track for the young kids

Pub. THQ **Dev.** Climax **ESRB** E **MSRP** $19.99

RATING [●●●◐○]

DID YOU KNOW?

If you're in the a-bit-older-than-Gen-X age bracket, those Hot Wheels from your childhood could earn you a lot of money. As of press time, the Hot Wheels Dealer's Showroom Display was going for a whopping $2,025 on eBay, and the reserve had yet to be met.

Jiang-shi
Yoh Asakura

SHAMAN KING: POWER OF SPIRIT

YOUR BORINGNESS HAS NOW REALLY ANNOYED ME

Effeminate teenage boys save the world. It's just what they do...some kind of genetic predisposition for altruism that shows up alongside the girly bone structure and lustrous (preferably purple, pink, or green) hair. Such is the lot in life for *Shaman King*'s pretty boy Yoh, though the game has him saving the world in a novel way, mixing a fighting game within a strategy game. Neat idea and all, but both games are dumbed-down and boring.

Stages begin on a grid that shouldn't be unfamiliar to tactical-game fans. Yoh (and his freaky pals) position themselves for battle, dosing up on items and abilities. When Yoh attacks someone or when someone attacks Yoh, the game turns brawler. Allow me to give you some expert advice for this situation: Hit the Square button. A lot. Seriously, I know there are some deeper techniques available in the game, but using those deeper techniques just leads to losses. Find a couple of quick moves and stick with them. And though you build up a big party, you can only control Yoh in the fights. Square, Square, Square, Square, Square, Square.

Trey
VS
Yoh Asakura

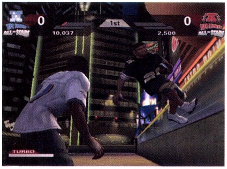
As for the strategy bits, they're pointless early in the game—as you're fighting one or two enemies, you make a couple of moves across the board, press the Square button a few times, and move on. The later levels put more characters on the battlefield, requiring a little more thought. Mostly, though, just know that you'll have to sacrifice up a particularly tough foe. And while there are plenty of items and special abilities to use, you just don't need them.

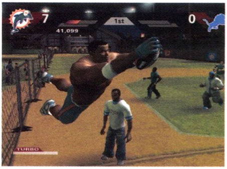
The real failure here is not giving these scattered gameplay elements necessity or use—most of *Shaman King* exists without purpose. It's not an awful game, just shallow and aimless. « *Robert Ashley*

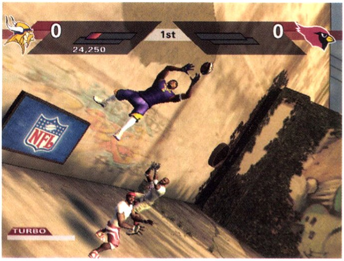
PROS Effeminate boys are saving the world
CONS You may have to buy a new controller once your Square button wears out

Pub. Konami **Dev.** Konami Japan **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.95

RATING [●●◐○○]







0
1st
0
12,500
PLAYERS
TURBO

THE MINIGAMES

Of the six new minigames included in *NFL Street 2*, you'll probably have the most fun with the two you played during recess in elementary school. Jump Ball Battle pits you against several other receivers primed to catch the most balls in a certain amount of time—it's a variant of what many remember as 500. Meanwhile, perform style maneuvers and hold on to the ball as long as you can without fumbling in Crush the Carrier—which you may remember (quite innocently) under a much less politically correct name that involves "smearing."

NFL STREET 2

BECAUSE 11 MONTHS IS TOO LONG TO GO WITHOUT ARCADE-STYLE FOOTBALL

I know what you're thinking because I thought it, too: "Do we really need two *NFL Street* games within a year of each other?" Well, now that I've played *NFL Street 2*, a less-than-startling answer has presented itself: "Only if you really, really liked the first one—or if you didn't buy it at all."

That said, *Street 2* comes with plenty of worthwhile additions to its distinct brand of playground-football-meets-superheroics. In fact, quite a few are likely to elicit a response from you of "Hey...that's kinda neat." Just not much beyond that.

Neatest of all is the wall-move gameplay mechanic that gives the game even more of an Arena Football League feel than the short field does. It's downright fun to bash a ball carrier into a wall—that is, if he doesn't run up the wall and over your lunge beforehand. You can earn some big GameBreaker points—maybe even for the souped-up, absolutely unstoppable GameBreaker 2—with wall moves, especially if you hit the designated hot spots spread along the sidelines.

Only thing is, not all plays control as perfectly as you'd expect from something produced by Tiburon. Since you need to hit L1 and Square to execute a wall pass, throwing to any receiver but Square is a challenge. It shouldn't be.

Imperfect controls affect you the most in the revamped NFL challenge mode, which returns as an even deeper veritable sports RPG—only instead of busting up cactuars, your team levels up with experience points gained from challenges like "calling only run plays, score on this drive." Which sucks sometimes. Imagine having to score three wall-dive TDs in a game to 24 (that gives you four shots total, Math Man), then finding out one doesn't count because you failed to hold down Square that extra quarter-second that distinguishes a leap from a simple hurdle. Or even worse, an A.I. compadre recovers a fumble and selfishly waltzes a yard into the end zone without diving off the wall. Should you ever have to exclaim "No, don't score a touchdown!" to a teammate in a football game? Well, I did.

Own the city mode continues the RPG theme in a more self-centered way, as you create one specific character to captain a team to complete dominance. Your XP powers up only him, and you hire new players just as you start to grow attached to the less-talented dudes being replaced. It's like you're constantly killing Aeris just so you can have the best roster to face Xzibit's Sephirothic NFL all-star team.

These additions (and others, such as the *NBA Jam*–like NFL gauntlet and the minigames showcased in the sidebar) are certainly welcome, but remember *NFL Blitz*? Midway recently iced the franchise because it realized that gamers tire of yearly editions of arcade-style sports games. It's very true, too. With that in mind, I really don't want the inevitable *NFL Street 3* to be "kinda neat." I want some real time spent on it. And I want it to blow me away. « *Chris Baker*

GAMEBREAKERS Excellent overall arcade-style gameplay, greatly refines the original game with fun new modes and wall moves
FUMBLES Imperfect controls, ridiculous challenge requirements in NFL challenge, no loyalty to recruits in own the city mode

Pub. EA Sports Big **Dev.** EA Tiburon **ESRB** E **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●◐○]

INUYASHA: THE SECRET OF THE CURSED MASK

YEP, IT'S A DOG

Have you ever wished you could be transported into the world of Cartoon Network and go on an adventure with InuYasha and pals? Me neither. But that's the fantasy that *InuYasha: The Secret of the Cursed Mask* lets you play out. Rather than simply taking control of the smart-assed dog-eared demon and his friends, you have the pleasure of playing as a typical Japanese teenager who happens to find himself (or herself!) mysteriously transported to feudal Japan. And appropriately enough, *InuYasha* plays like self-insert fan fiction: It's just as trite and doubly as embarrassing.

InuYasha never, ever strays from the bog-standard RPG formula: Talk to people and buy healing items and armor in towns, slog through dungeons filled with random battles and treasure, fight boss monsters, save a little girl, repeat until the credits roll. And you will most definitely slog—the battles are far too frequent and excruciatingly slow paced.

Just going through the menu options to pick your attacks is enough to put you to sleep. In what seems to be an attempt to keep things vaguely interesting, a *Grandia*-inspired display at the top of the screen shows you the order in which the combatants' turns will come up next, but knowing this is of little consequence.

But what about fans of the anime? *InuYasha otaku* may indeed feel the urge to play this, if only for the new half-hour of animated sequences that were created just for the game (and voiced by the original English language version's cast). But the rest of the game's graphics just don't match up—the 2D backgrounds are bland and numbingly repetitive, and the 3D character models are positively archaic. All in all, *InuYasha* plays and looks like somebody created it with *RPG Maker 2*. And if you've played around with *RPG Maker 2*, you know that is in no way, shape, or form a compliment. « *Chris Kohler*

HOWL While it's not especially well translated, the dialogue can be funny

WOOF The hardest part of the battles is staying awake to finish them

HAIKU VERDICT This game is not good / and fans of the anime / won't like it either

Pub. Bandai **Dev.** Bandai **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●○○○○]

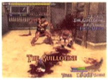
THE REAL INUYASHA

According to the show, InuYasha is a half-demon who wants the Jewel of the Four Souls so he can become a full demon, although at one point he wanted to use the jewel to become a full human. This dream died after he was pinned to a tree by Kikyo, damn her.

THE REAL AGRIPPA

Agrippa and Octavianus are both real dudes, but here's a piece of secret Roman history that the textbooks don't tell you. According to *The Tick*, Agrippa is also the Roman god of the aqueduct and hangs out in superhero bars to pick up chicks.

Meat Sculptor



3 Chain!
Wrath Of The Gods
60 Salvos!
Disarmed
Total 1425 Salvos!

SHADOW OF ROME

ROMA VICTA

The fact that Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* is one of the few modern gladiatorial epics is an indication of how much cultural tastes can change. It was only a few scant decades ago that cinema houses were filled with scenes of hulking men putting on skirts and clashing it out in the ring. Perhaps *Shadow of Rome* is an attempt by Keiji Inafune (creator of the *Onimusha* franchise) to rekindle interest in this sadly neglected genre. It's a hearty first step, but a flawed one.

SOR perfectly demonstrates why gladiator battles would be the perfect pay-per-view sport. Playing as Agrippa, the son of an accused murderer of Caesar, you find yourself going from battling hairy Germans in the forest to decapitating fellow prisoners in the arena or rescuing hostages from angry dwarves. Breakable weapons, combos that change depending on your weapon in hand, multiple objectives, chariots, deathtraps, animals, and buckets of blood help make the combat relentless and exciting. And that's just the normal combat. The bosses are challenging, incredible, and creative—some of the best action bosses seen in recent memory. Adding to the feeling of spectacle is the use of "salvos," which are wrestling-style names for various moves (such as "Juicy Tomato" for smashing someone's head with a mace or "Flesh Attack" for beating somebody with a severed arm or head. Besides the graphic (literally) splendor of combat, the controls are quite fluid and responsive as well—with the camera being combat's only real flaw.

As spectacularly awesome and over-the-top as the combat is, the buzz gets harshed by Octavianus' toga-swapping hijinks. For one thing, they barely make sense (why does Octavianus have a map that lets him see where all the guards are? Apollo's divine sight?), and they just slow the game down to a crawl. Instead of intricate combat, you get amateur stealth—replete with knocking out dudes, stealing clothes, and audibly distracting guards. Octavianus' parts are annoying interludes between Agrippa's flesh-slicing escapades.

It's sad that some of the best pure action on the PS2 is paired with such amateurish stealth. Which would you rather do: kill an elephant or dress up as a maid to bypass a guard? *Shadow of Rome*'s effort to mix things up is a noble one, but brawn should have beat the crap out of brains in this instance. « *Thierry Nguyen*

HAIL CAESAR! Pretty awesome Roman man-on-man blood sport

ET TU, BRUTE? Out-of-place *Metal Gear Toga*

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Capcom **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●●○]

THE GETAWAY: BLACK MONDAY

I DON'T LIKE MONDAYS

F-BOMBS

"You f***ing c***!" says one of *Black Monday's* characters. A quick poll of anyone within earshot provoked a general consensus that this may be the first use of the dreaded C-word in a videogame. It isn't. CJ uses it in *San Andreas*, but somehow it seems significantly less offensive then. I understand *Black Monday's* need to appear gritty and edgy, but the script is so badly executed that it just makes everyone sound stupid. There's a scene about halfway through the game in a gym in which the lovable Cockney ruffians are planning their bank job, and it's like eavesdropping on the mentally challenged.

Here is a sequel that finds itself in the rare position of actually being considerably worse than its precursor. While there have been improvements, overall, this sequel is worse than the original game. The structure of *Black Monday* is as convoluted and pretentious as its forebear; whereas the original is flawed but ambitious, the sequel is simply flawed. It so desperately wants to be taken seriously and make you feel as though you're playing a multithreaded Guy Ritchie movie that it completely loses sight of what makes videogames enjoyable.

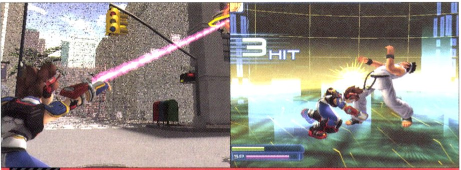
As in the original, your experience is essentially divided into two types of gameplay. First, there are the sluggish driving scenes through the painstakingly, but ultimately inconsequentially, well-modeled streets of London, and then there are the insufferably monotonous run-and-gun scenes that are further marred by a camera of *Tomb Raider* caliber. In its attempts to be arty and accessible, it would appear that the whole notion of actually letting the player have some sense of control was deemed unnecessary. The lack of onscreen "clutter" is just the beginning because the game doesn't really want to give you full responsibility for anything except the most basic elements—driving, running, and shooting. I understand—and in a way admire—what it's trying to do, but by eliminating the freedom and interactivity of the experience, all you gain is a sense of detachment.

In a misguided attempt to make you feel as though you're being treated with more respect, objectives are communicated simply through dialogue, but you'll often find that you don't remember what was said, or more likely, you'll struggle to comprehend the blitzkrieg of colloquialisms and F-bombs. There's also the unfortunate matter of seemingly inconsequential and out-of-context outbursts of dialogue that pepper every scene. "I can't take this anymore," the embarrassingly overwrought antihero of the first act grumbles with passionless regularity. You and me both, mate. « *John Davison*

WHY? Oversimplified controls and an atrocious camera. If it were a movie, you'd leave the theater halfway through and not care about the conclusion.

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Team Soho **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●○○○]



VIRTUA QUEST

OUR VIRTUA QUESTION: WHY HAS SEGA FORSAKEN US?

You have to respect a game like *Virtua Quest*. It may not be good, but at least it's up front about its shortcomings.

The first hour of the game sees you running through a VR platforming sequence, which gives you a feel for how imprecise and clumsy the action portion of the game is. Then you're thrust into narrow alleyways, where you learn that the incredibly limited camera makes it impossible to get a good sense of your surroundings. You also get a taste of the game's heroically terrible voice acting, the overly familiar plot, and the creepy character animation.

We may never know exactly what Sega was hoping to accomplish with *Virtua Quest*. The prospect of a *Virtua Fighter*–themed RPG is unquestionably appealing, but this attempt strayed even further from the mark than the last one (which turned into *Shenmue*). The graphics look like the junior edition of *Phantasy Star Online*, the plot is a mash-up of *Mega Man Battle Network* and *.hack*, and the gameplay could best be described as a sloppy, pugilistic rip-off of *Mega Man Legends* with *Metroid Prime*'s grappling beam and *Prince of Persia*'s wall running thrown in.

Ultimately, what *Virtua Quest* proves is that putting great characters into a lousy game doesn't make the game any less lousy. It just robs those characters of their dignity. And all that we can hope now is that *Virtua Fighter 5* comes along soon to undo the sins of its spin-off. « *Jeremy Parish*

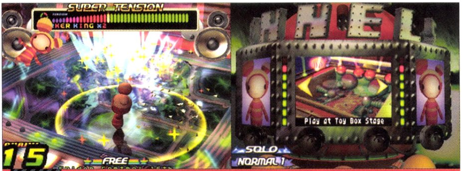
VIRTUA But just barely
VIRTUE Is hard to find in this wreck

Pub. Sega **Dev.** Sega AM2 **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●○○○]

PLAY IT!

Just how brain-dead is *Virtua Quest*'s fighting? You can win the vast majority of battles by jumping in, hitting the Attack button three times as you land, and finishing on the ground with a Mouko Kouhazan—the very first skill you learn.



TECHNIC BEAT

GROOVE LIKE A PLATYPUS

It's tempting to award five blargs to any game that features a scuba-mask-wearing platypus. Sadly, the temptation withers away after a little while with this game.

Technic Beat, imported from our friendly neighbors to the east (Japan), lets you pick one of six avatars, choose a song, and then dash around on a stage trying to trigger circles (called markers) at the correct time. One-star difficulty songs are fairly basic, but higher-level songs, prove a lot trickier—*Technic Beat* requires a good deal more strategy than your typical rhythm game. Each avatar has its own special set of moves, and you'll need to master these if you want to have a prayer of winning. The game's setup is a little awkward—completion of a round kicks you back to the main screen.

The song list...well, it would have been nice to have more variety. A good chunk of the songs are remixes of classic Namco videogame songs. If you've ever dreamed of keeping the beat to theme songs from *The Tower of Druaga* or *The Return of Ishtar*, your lofty desires have finally been fulfilled. There are no previews of song titles, so it's hard to keep track of what you've done and what you haven't.

In spite of Hassy, my little duck-billed friend, this game failed to completely click for me. However, hardcore rhythm-game aficionados will welcome the variation on gameplay, and old-school gamers will appreciate the song selection more than casual gamers will. Plus, it's only 20 bucks. « *Dana Jongewaard*

PROS Gives an old dog some new tricks
CONS Could use better songs, awkward setup

Pub. Mastiff **Dev.** Arika **ESRB** E **MSRP** $19.99

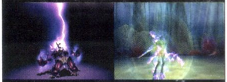
RATING [●●●○○]

DUEL MASTERS

OR: HOW I LEARNED TO STOP CONDESCENDING AND LOVE THE CARDS

In 10th grade *Magic: The Gathering* swept through my high school cafeteria like a geek plague. The ROTC kids traded their *Guns & Ammo* centerfolds for rare ogres and color-coded enchantments offering +5/+5 blocking against winged enemies. The band dorks fell into a strange, card-shuffling hypnosis. The drama table, my own nerd republic, soon became all *Magic*, all the time. But I was too cool for that. I had videogame magazines to read and bad punk rock bands to name-drop. A *Magic* refugee, I found myself playing hacky sack with the learning-disabled future rehab patients I now call my friends.

A decade later, I'm playing *Duel Masters*, a game based on a card series by *Magic* gurus Wizards of the Coast. It's an ugly mess of clashing styles. Maybe the artists didn't talk to each other but just took off in their own misguided directions. The monsters must have escaped from Napoleon Dynamite's sketchbook: There's a purple yak with long horns; a skull-faced, evil train engine; and a whale with bat wings. The "cartoon" cut-scenes look like Reagan-era drug war propaganda.



But I start to notice the card game beneath the façade. It's interesting, fun even, much easier to learn than I thought it'd be, and more user-friendly than your average RPG battle system. I'm kind of addicted. Too bad the story mode is just a series of matches spread across a noninteractive map. You click your way from the mall to the school to the (buy 'em!) card shop.

Then I stumble onto extreme mode. It ditches turns in favor of timers, forcing you to rely on your instincts in a faster-paced game. It's a bit confusing (little clocks and meters abound), but much more exciting. I'm compelled to play. I imagine myself back in the cafeteria, all the geeks, myself included, huddled around the folding banquet tables, oblivious to appearances, just having fun. « *Robert Ashley*

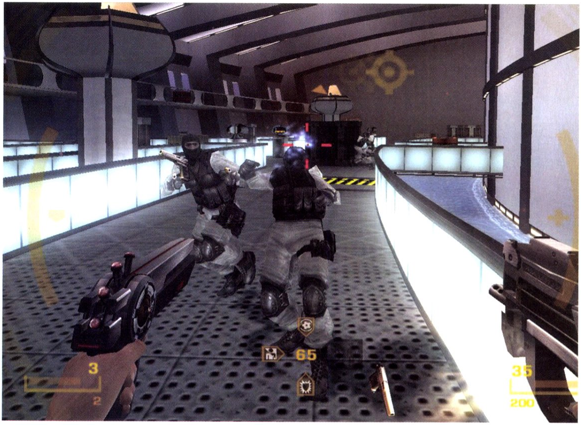
PROS Solid gameplay offering flashbacks for former *Magic* players
CONS Awkward story mode, uuuuuuuuugly

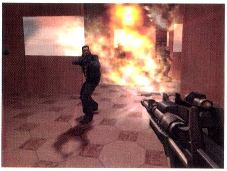
Pub. Atari **Dev.** High Voltage Software **ESRB** E **MSRP** $39.95

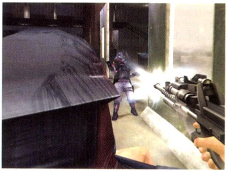
RATING [●●●○○]

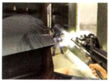
HODGEPODGE

Duel Masters' artistic reference points: air-brushed fantasy art on the side of a brown 1974 Dodge Sportsman van; Smokey the Bear PSAs; Hot Topic employees (spikes, no piercings); hallucinations induced by parsley smoking, toad licking, or listening to albums by the band Yes.









GOLDENEYE: ROG

I EXPECT YOU TO DIE!

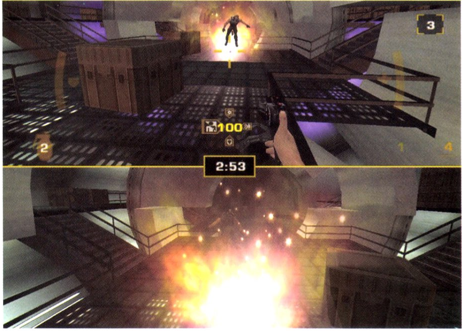
GoldenEye was the first Bond movie to have a 00 agent as the primary villain, so it would be fitting if the *GoldenEye* game were the first *Bond* game to let you play as a villain. Problem is, *GoldenEye* was already made into a seminal N64 shooter, and this new *GoldenEye* doesn't quite live to the promise of either the previous *GoldenEye* game or the "play an evil 00 agent for once!" premise.

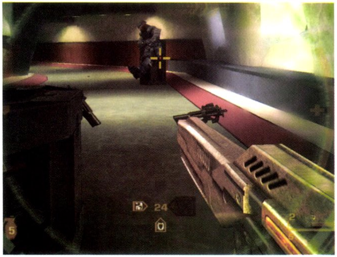
Despite the title, the game has no relation to Brosnan's first 007 movie—it's a literal description of your character's new powers. After being kicked out of MI6 for killing a virtual Bond in simulator training, you are recruited by Goldfinger in his war against Dr. No (who took out one of your eyes) for control of the underworld. For some reason Scaramanga (Christopher Lee in *The Man with the Golden Gun*) becomes your eye technician—he adds upgrades to your replacement eye, which just happens to be made out of gold. So you're left using your eye powers and your shooter skills in what turns out to be a very average FPS.

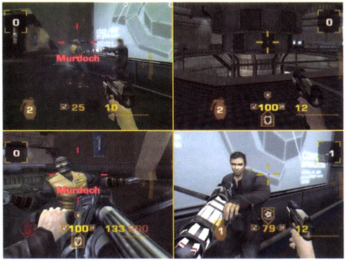
In all fairness, your 24-karat eye is quite nifty. It allows you to project force fields, push enemies forward, see through walls, and remotely hack weapons and devices, making it quite the slick gadget that enhances your gunplay. When it works. Each of these powers uses up a huge amount of "eye power," and realistically, you can use one power twice before being forced to wait to recharge—thus the eye turns from "slick gadget" to "amusing yet limited gimmick" due to its power consumption. Not only did I not get to use the eye as much as I wanted to, but I tended to not even try to use it because of its limited usage.

DESPITE THE MANTRA OF PLAYING AS EVIL, YOU'RE NOT THAT EVIL.

Rogue Agent's other proposed claims to fame include your ability to dual-wield weapons, and its "EVIL A.I." Dual wielding is honestly quite fun, its main flaw being that there aren't enough single-handed weapons







00 AGENTS ONLINE

Splitscreen and online multiplayer, much like the rest of the game, are merely decent. Some rudimentary features (team selection, game-mode switching) are oddly either missing or not very functional. One-on-one duels are fun on splitscreen, but once you get more players, flawed options outweigh shootery fun.

LICENSE TO REPEAT

HAVEN'T WE BEEN HERE BEFORE?

Bond movies are full of bright, flashy eye candy; sadly, this game doesn't do a good job of imitating that. The graphics are very bland, the low-detailed textures are barely lit, and characters look two years too late, which is odd, considering that EA manages to fill most of its games with the exceeded daily allowance of bloom, lighting, and texture detail. A prowl on the streets of the horrendous *Catwoman* is easier on the eyes than a walk through the plain hallways that populate *Rogue Agent*. These corridors of plainness are laid out in a rudimentary fashion for the most part, so not only does the game already feel straightforward, but the lack of polish and color makes it feel oppressively linear. You're not so much going from point A to point B as you are being shoved mercilessly down the path from A to B. Even the involvement of Sir Ken Adam—who contributed designs to some of the Bond films—isn't enough to save things; his bold production design here is often mired by the exceedingly vanilla halls around it. The giant space rockets, lavish casinos, and intimidating-sounding lairs are buried deep within a web of plain, similar-looking corridors populated by even more similarly attired guards.

UE AGENT

to mix and match, which limits your gun set (I stuck with either two assault rifles or an assault rifle and a shotgun). Overall, the gun arsenal is run of the mill, despite the remote detonator and the odd poison gun.

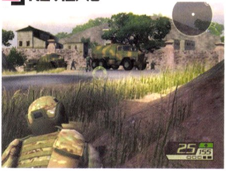
The A.I. is quite competent at times—enemies use cover decently, and I liked how I can chase a baddie around a piece of cover rather than see him stay in one place and take damage. Yet for all these occasional moments of competency, there are odd moments, such as when guards are possessed with some weird "evil prescience" (they will often say things like "He's using the eye!" seconds after it happens, even if they don't actually see you) or when they take other guards hostage (I'm just going to kill both of them anyway, so why do they bother)? Additionally, there are some fun deathtraps—in both single- and multiplayer—that are sadly limited in number. Also, despite the game's mantra of playing as evil, you're not that evil. You don't fight MI6 or somesuch; rather, you end up fighting agents who work for Dr. No—meaning you're actually the bad guy who fights...other bad guys, not the good guys.

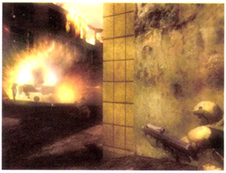
Unfortunately, slick powers, moderately competent A.I., and amusing deathtraps can't save *Rogue Agent* from being bland, linear, and repetitive—it tends to give too much of the mediocre and not enough of the awesome. *GoldenEye* as a name conjures up thoughts like "excellent N64 game," "decent Bond movie with Pierce Brosnan and that guy who played Boromir," and "That Famke Janssen certainly stirs my loins!" Now it can add "Oh, that was also an OK shooter, meh" to its thought-bubble train. « *Thierry Nguyen*

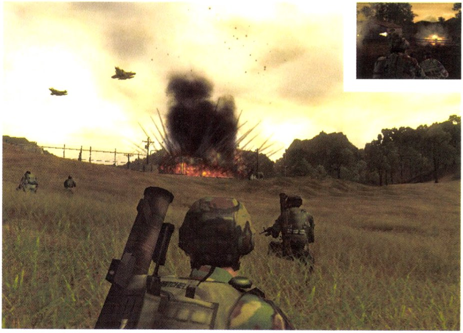
CONNERY Amusing multiplayer mode, kinda neat powers, decent A.I.
LAZENBY Bland graphics, powers aren't used enough, repetitive and linear, you don't get to be really evil

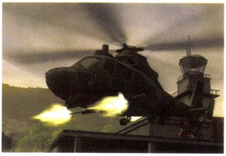
Pub. EA Games **Dev.** EALA **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●○○]









ONLINE TRAVESTY

A solid online mode would have helped raise *Ghost Recon 2*s score a bit. Unfortunately, this is without question the ugliest, choppiest, least pleasant online experience I can remember having. The Ubi.com interface is solid, useful, and sensible, but the gameplay itself—I'm not exaggerating here—honestly looks like it's from a PS1 game with an unusually far draw distance. Compared to the nice-looking single-player mode, it's shockingly ugly, and the framerate is astonishingly low given the ridiculously low-res textures and limited palette. It's not quite unplayable, but it's so bad as to make all but the most hardcore *Ghost Recon* fans turn away in horror.

GHOST RECON 2

THERE'S NO A.I. IN "TEAM"

Dear fellow Ghosts,

Why do you hate me? Was it something I said? Did I forget your birthdays or something? I've been racking my brain to try to figure out why you have it in for me, but I just can't figure it out.

You must want me dead. I don't know why else you would fail to take out an enemy soldier standing *three feet* in front of us—or, alternately, ignore his existence altogether. You are supposed to be highly trained professionals, right? Shouldn't that involve a certain remedial marksmanship skill? You, Diaz: That is a sniper rifle you're holding, right? Do you think maybe you could use it to, oh, *snipe* something? Just once? For me?

Or is it that you're all suicidal? That would explain why you walk directly into my line of fire *while I'm firing*, and fail to take obstacles into account when lobbing grenades (that's one episode that won't be going in the Christmas letter this year). It might also explain why you completely neglect to follow my lead when I'm trying to be stealthy. Here's a hint, people: When I hit the deck, you hit the deck. It's really quite simple.

Maybe you're distracted all the time by the pretty environments we're wandering around in. They do look nice, I agree, and a hell of a lot better than those in our last two outings. Moving through them is smoother, faster, and generally more pleasant than before, too. But do you think you could maybe try to focus on the task at hand? You know, killing the bad guys? That'd be great.

But maybe you're just depressed. I feel for you, I do. It certainly can be disheartening to know that if we screw anything up—even if we're steps away from completing our mission—we have to go back to the beginning and start all over again, no exceptions. And it's tough to go into a battle situation knowing that we'll get no help out in the field, not so much as a medkit to heal our wounds. I'd imagine that's even worse for you than it is for me, considering that your incompetence makes you all but useless for anything except decoy duty—which means I just have to send you off across the field and hope the bad guys shoot at you instead of me.

How about this, I'll make a deal with you: I'll stop using you to draw fire away from me if you'll start actually using those big hunks of metal you're lugging around. Just point the loud end at the bad men, that's all I ask. How does that sound?

Sincerely,
Your commander
P.S. Write back soon. « *Joe Rybicki*

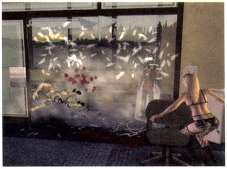
COMMENDATIONS Much nicer, smoother graphics than previous *Ghost Recons*, decent variety, serious challenge level

COURT MARTIAL Lobotomized teammates, restrictive environments, and enemies with X-ray vision make it necessary to memorize entire levels

Pub. Ubisoft **Dev.** Ubisoft Shanghai **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●○○]

CLOWN COLLEGE
As with the last game, *There Goes The Neighborhood's* soundtrack is filled with licensed material, including tracks from Andrew WK and the ever-so-popular Insane Clown Posse. They must have fun putting on their makeup for every single public appearance.



BACKYARD WRESTLING 2

THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD—AND THERE GOES THE FUN

Really, to imply that there was any fun in *Backyard Wrestling 2* at some point would be giving the game far too much credit. The problem is that instead of embracing the somewhat entertaining *Power Stone*–like formula of the original, *Backyard Wrestling 2* attempts to be more of a traditional wrestling game—well, at least as traditional as throwing someone onto a hot grill or an empty pool can be. The end result is a game that doesn't truly know if it wants to be over the top or a semigenuine portrayal of what hardcore wrestling is like.

Either way, it fails. The over-the-top stuff, which includes smashing an opponent's face into various objects in the environment, grows pretty tiresome, particularly after you've already seen all the interactive environments of a specific level. It becomes even more irritating when you have to sit through the same animation over and over anytime you use part of the level, such as the doors on a shed, as a weapon. As far as the actual wrestling goes, the grappling system is simple—too simple, in fact. There are the basic four options when in standard grapple, along with a few reversal and special moves, so there isn't a whole lot of variation in the attacks. Though it's not like that matters, since it's almost just as easy to win a match by simply throwing some punches and kicks.

But what really makes this whole game a disaster is the presentation. The character models and environments look like they were made using *Fighter Maker*, which is to say that no one with a fundamental familiarity with 3D modeling was hired to make this game. These things, along with a nearly nonexistent career mode and some superbly horrible FMV clips—complete with videos of everyone's favorite rapping clowns—make the fun train come to a complete stop. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

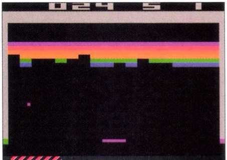
VERDICT If it means you won't attempt these moves in real life, then go right ahead and purchase this game

Pub. Eidos **Dev.** Paradox Entertainment **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●◐○○○]

TRY INSTEAD...

Rather than bludgeoning yourself with *Atari Anthology*, pick up *Activision Anthology*. The games are better, the bonus materials rock, and there's even a licensed soundtrack of '80s hits, providing ample opportunity for rocking out in style.



ATARI ANTHOLOGY

LEST WE FORGET

Having 67 of Atari's own Atari 2600 games on one disc is a bit of a shocking history lesson. This is due to two major factors: 1) The 2600's limitations—graphical and otherwise—have definitely not aged well, and 2) Atari wasn't very good at designing games for it, anyway.

Games that are truly playable 20-plus years after they were made are fairly sparse in this collection. You've got your *Combat*, your *Yars' Revenge*, your *Asteroids*...and not much else. Contrast this with Activision's fantastic 2600 collection of a couple years back and there's just no contest. Oh sure, there are plenty of games here that will keep your interest for a few minutes. *Atari Video Cube* is a fairly interesting puzzle game, and you may spend some time with the *Swordquest* trilogy trying to figure out what the hell is going on. You might even find yourself transfixed by the sports games, gaping in horror as you would at a still-smoking train wreck. But after a few minutes, you'll move on, looking for a shiny needle in this haystack of mediocrity. Good luck with that.

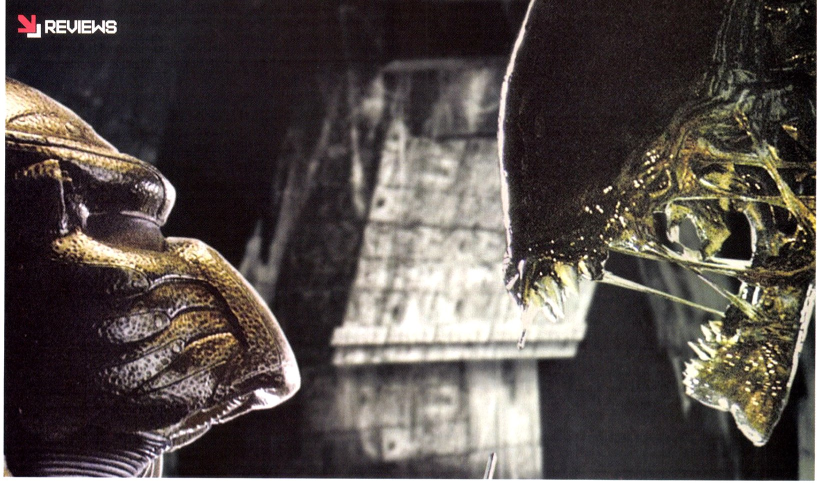
Fortunately, there is one bright spot in this bleak collection: No doubt aware that 2600 nostalgia only goes so far, Atari threw in 18 of the earliest arcade games in its arsenal. We're talking *Pong*, folks. *Asteroids. Lunar Lander.* These are vastly more playable than just about anything in the 2600 section, even though most suffer from a difficult-to-translate control scheme. Also interesting are the bonus materials that come with each game, including manual scans, box and cabinet shots, and promotional flyers—but again, these don't hold a candle to Activision Anthology's promotional videos and commercials.

So, what have we learned? Pretty much this: Most of the Atari 2600's great titles had little to do with Atari. If you're hankering for that nostalgia fix, pick up *Activision Anthology* instead. Now, if we could only get an *Imagic Anthology*.... « *Joe Rybicki*

BUY IT IF You're a 2600 freak who can't miss out on any of the "classics" or a morbidly curious youngster who wants to see what Mom and Dad used to play
AVOID IT IF You're younger than 30, except where noted above

Pub. Atari **Dev.** Digital Eclipse **ESRB** E **MSRP** $19.99

RATING [●●○○○]



ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

(Sanaa Lathan, Lance Henriksen)

ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST by John Scalzi

This film resembles the original *Alien* film like store-brand grape soda in an aluminum can resembles a jeroboam of Dom Perignon, vintage 1983. Theoretically, they share a common element (grapes), but of course, it's what they do with that element that counts. Like a grape soda, you can enjoy *AVP* in its way, but—also like a grape soda—it's metallic and artificial, and you're not really going to confuse it with being good.

But this flick doesn't only debase the *Alien* series, it also drops a load on the lesser (but still better than this) *Predator* films and jams the two antagonistic extraterrestrials together to slug it out—in Antarctica—while a bunch of hapless, stupid humans manage to get themselves in the middle. The movie tries to re-create some of the *Alien* mojo by having the one smart person be a woman—actress Sanaa Lathan, who is in fact the lone bright spot—but the film itself is too dumb for her character to save it or herself. Eventually, you have to content yourself with aliens and predators whaling on each other, and there's already a series of videogames that does that better.

Blame here falls in two places: first, on writer-director Paul W.S. Anderson, whom I dumped on last month in connection with *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* for being the hackiest of hacks to ever hoist a film camera. There's no point rehashing the rant; just know it exists. Second, blame falls on 20th Century Fox, which has defiled one of the great series in film history for a quick squeeze of profit (and not that great of a squeeze, since the film did mediocre business). I hope both of them are very happy with their grape soda.

RATING [●●○○○]

CELLULAR

(Kim Basinger, Chris Evans)

Hello, it's Kim Basinger on the line, and if you hang up, she's gonna die! (This is when you ask, Does *L.A. Confidential* really make up for *Cool World*?) This one-trick thriller (kidnapped woman randomly calls dude with a cell phone; he struggles to keep the connection to save her) strings out its trick pretty well, and a smarter-than-usual cast gives it juice. Since I can't talk to my friend in L.A. for six seconds without his cell service dropping out, I doubt the premise, but movies are fiction, you know.

RATING [●●●◐○]

SKY CAPTAIN

(Jude Law, Gwyneth Paltrow)

This fascinating little film's reason for existing is primarily technical—director Kerry Conran created the entire thing on green-screen soundstages which were bare save for his actors, their costumes, and a few props. Everything else was created through computer animation. This gave Conran a chance to create breathtaking sets and scenes for a fraction of what real sets and effects would have cost; for the relatively modest sum of $70 million, you get what looks like a $200 million film.

Still, here's a tip: No matter what you spend, story still counts, and despite *Sky Captain*'s dazzling retro-future look (it takes place in a 1939 that never was), the film's story is too damn silly. Both Gwyneth Paltrow as a scrappy ace reporter and prissy Jude Law as Sky Captain look like they're taking part in a high school reader's-theater performance. This makes the case for having at least a few more props and sets around in the future.

RATING [●●●○○]

CATWOMAN

(Halle Berry, Sharon Stone)

A mousy nobody gains hot, catlike powers and fights with Sharon Stone because, well, why not? Yes, it's bad—an incoherent swatch of art design with no one home on either side of the camera. The director, Pitof, got his start doing special effects, and he gets confused as to what to do with all those humans cluttering up his handiwork. On the other hand, Halle Berry in bondage leather! Normally, I'd be appalled at myself for resorting to pure ogling, but the ogle factor is all this film has going for it.

RATING [●○○○○]

HAROLD & KUMAR GO TO WHITE CASTLE

(John Cho, Kal Penn)

I love this film out of proportion to its quality, because I usually don't identify with the protagonists of most stoner films, but I do here. I went to school with enough assumed-to-be-straitlaced people just like Harold and Kumar that just about every scene had a terrifying bong hit of recognition to it. It's funny and it's true, and that's all I want from my stoner films. Plus, Neil Patrick Harris is bizarrely cool here. The only thing wrong with the film is the fact that White Castle sliders are, in fact, vile.

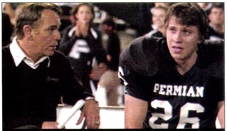
RATING [●●●◐○]

TROY

(Brad Pitt, Orlando Bloom)

Troy does to *The Iliad* what the Greeks did to the Trojans with that wooden horse of theirs, ransacking and pillaging the source material to come up with a noisy faux epic that's mostly about the hotly tressed Brad Pitt, who first sulks around and then gets pissed because dude, they totally killed Patroclus! I like Pitt, but he's a bit modern for the sword and sandals bit. Still, the film did do half a billion in business, and most of it in the Old World, so clearly, what do I know?

RATING [●●◐○○]

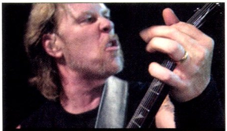


FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS

(Billy Bob Thornton, Lucas Black)

I've got nothing against Texas, but I will say this: Y'all take your football a little too seriously. *Friday Night Lights* is a film about Texas high school football, based on a nonfiction book of the same name. And what you get out of the film (aside from good football action and another fine performance by Billy Bob Thornton as the coach) is the feeling that if Jesus came down to Texas on a Friday night, Texans would ask him to wait until the end of the fourth quarter to initiate the Rapture.

RATING [●●●●○]

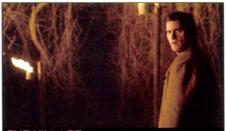


METALLICA: SOME KIND OF MONSTER

(James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich)

Normally, the thought of watching a heavy metal band work out long-festering personal problems with a therapist would make me attempt to ingest an operating weed whacker. But Metallica is Metallica, and there is something weirdly fascinating about watching men who never had to grow up try to jam decades of adult development into a couple of hours of film. Sadly, the album that came out of this personal enlightenment was *St. Anger*, but I guess not every movie has a happy ending.

RATING [●●●●○]



THE VILLAGE

(Joaquin Phoenix, William Hurt)

Note to M. Night Shyamalan: You know those clever endings your films are known for? Yeah, well, only one of them was clever (*The Sixth Sense*), and the rest have gotten progressively lamer. You got away with it in *Signs* because the rest of the flick was good, but *The Village* not only has the dumbest twist, it also features the most boring story—an isolated 19th-century-ish town stalked by freaky creatures, and Joaquin Phoenix having feelings for a blind girl? Wake me when you're done.

RATING [●●○○○]

DVD RELEASES

January 4
Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle
Millennium: Season 2
Troy

January 11
The Village
Without a Paddle

January 18
Catwoman
Cellular
Curb Your Enthusiasm: Season 3
The Forgotten
Friday Night Lights

January 25
Ali G Indahouse: The Movie
Alien vs. Predator
The Chronicles of Riddick
Metallica: Some Kind of Monster
Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow

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REPLAY

96>

PRINCE 2

MAXED-OUT HEALTH AND WEIRD WEAPONS IN WARRIOR WITHIN

PARTNERSHIP WITH PRIMA
Prima Games, leading publisher of gaming guides, provides *OPM* with top-of-the-line strategies every month. In this issue, Prima's strategy gurus share their expertise by dealing out a host of crazy *San Andreas* tricks. Check back next month for even more.

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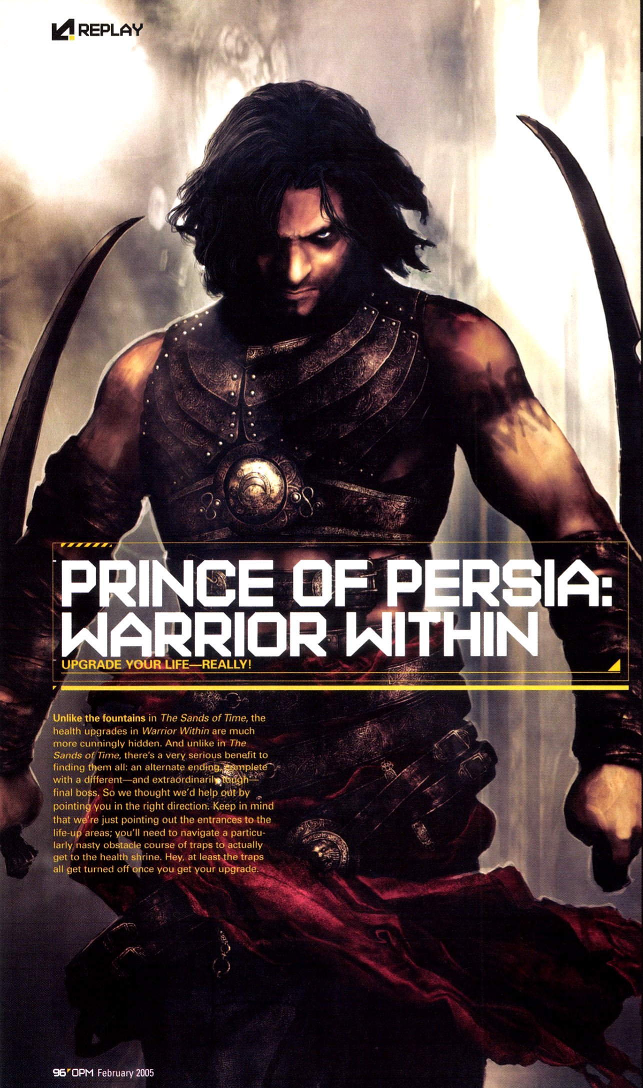
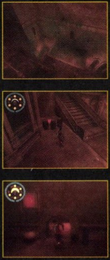


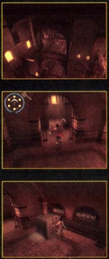
PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN

UPGRADE YOUR LIFE—REALLY!

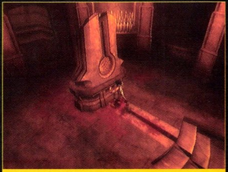
Unlike the fountains in *The Sands of Time*, the health upgrades in *Warrior Within* are much more cunningly hidden. And unlike in *The Sands of Time*, there's a very serious benefit to finding them all: an alternate ending, complete with a different—and extraordinarily tough—final boss. So we thought we'd help out by pointing you in the right direction. Keep in mind that we're just pointing out the entrances to the life-up areas; you'll need to navigate a particularly nasty obstacle course of traps to actually get to the health shrine. Hey, at least the traps all get turned off once you get your upgrade.



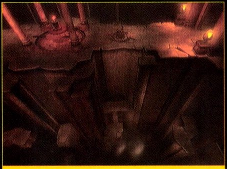
Shortly after gaining the ability to slow down time, you'll once again pass through the past version of the area where you first encountered the crow boss. If you follow the general path you used to reach him, you'll notice a switch at the bottom of the stairway. Hit it, slow down time, and run up the stairs; you'll have just enough time to roll through the waist-high doorway at the top of the stairs.



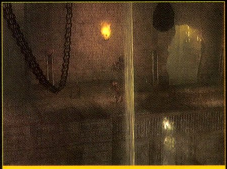
While working your way up through the room where you first encounter the ninja girls, you'll notice that one of the corner platforms has a doorway that's covered by some pretty bent-up bars, and behind the bars is a lonely crate. Once you get ahold of the sword that breaks through walls, return to this area, bust the bars, pull the crate out, and flip up to the level above.



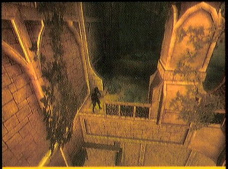
This is the easiest health-up to get. After fighting Shahdee (you know, the one who looks like the brunette twin of *Soul Calibur*'s Ivy), head up the stairs toward the altar. Grab it and pull; once you get it out far enough, a door will open up behind it.



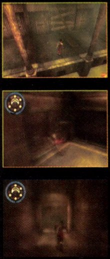
Once you've used the sword Kaileena gives you to activate the switch in the huge pillared room, rotate the switch a full 180 degrees so that it's pointing toward the doorway you came in from. This will complete the pathway to the hourglass room, but it will also raise up some platforms off to the left. Use them to work your way to the doorway far below.



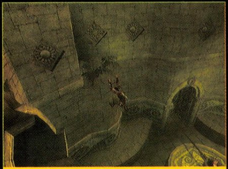
On the lowest level of the mechanical tower—you know, the room where that huge brute is heaving exploding dogs at you—head to the left as soon as you get in. There's a breakable wall there that crumbles to dust when an explosion goes off nearby.



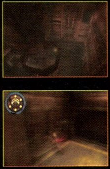
In the first outdoor area of the garden tower, you'll find one ridiculously overgrown area with a huge tree in it. Before working your way up, head to the lower-left corner—directly to the left of where you entered this lush garden. You'll notice that part of the wall is missing; drop down to the ledges below.



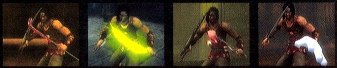
This one's tricky. After beating the brute in the prison and climbing up to the next level, you'll notice a boarded-up doorway halfway down the left side of the room. Break through it and you'll find a switch; before flipping it, though, head to the opposite side of the room and break the wall there. Now flip the switch, slow down time immediately—you'll need every second—and run over through the doorway you just opened.



In the second outdoor area of the garden tower, you'll need to find a way to turn the water on. In the room with the switch that activates the water, climb up the ledges in the back.



An easy one in the library: As you work your way up, you'll end up atop the wall of one of the two roundish rooms. Jump over to the other room, then walk all the way around toward the right. You'll see the ledge you'll be jumping to next to the elaborately filigreed door. Drop down, sidle over to the right side of the door, and climb up.



WEAPONS OF MASS ABSURDITY

EVEN THIS SURLY PRINCE HAS A SENSE OF HUMOR

You'll come across some truly odd secondary weapons in well-hidden locations spread throughout the game.

WHAT Teddy Bear
WHERE Mechanical Tower
WHEN Present
HOW Shortly after shifting to the present, look for the room where you last fought the big brute. Leave the room to the left, climb the stairs, and drop down into the shallow pool. Break the wall on the left.

WHAT Hockey Stick
WHERE Central Access Room
WHEN Past
HOW Follow the directions to the health-up shrine in the huge pillared room. Before going in, break the weapons rack to the right of the doorway.

WHAT Glowing Sword
WHERE Mystic Caves
WHEN Past
HOW You'll reach a particularly foggy area where you need to fight a bunch of wolflike creatures, flip a switch, and jump from stalactite to stalactite to make it to the open door in time. In that room is a shallow pit; break the wall on the left end of the pit.

WHAT Flamingo
WHERE Garden Tower
WHEN Present
HOW At the highest point in the fountain room, head for the alcove where you pulled the switch to drop the ladder. Break the rear wall.

WHAT Rayman's Fist
WHERE Catacombs
WHEN Present
HOW When you go up the stairs to leave the room, the Dahaka will bust through a grate to chase you. Once you return to the central room, head back up the stairs and he will chase you into the hallway he first came out of. After swinging on a few bars and jumping over a small pit, you'll come to a fork in the path. Turn sharply left and smash the weapons rack—you'll need to be very fast to grab the fist before the Dahaka catches you.

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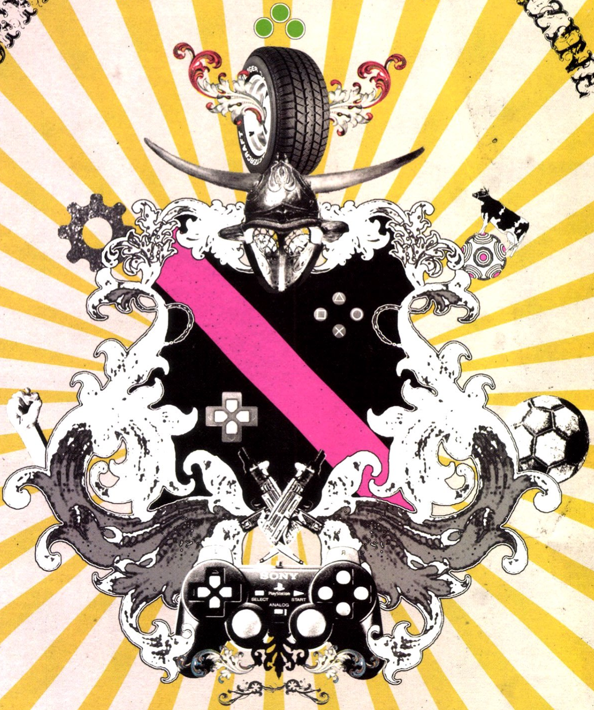


OUR VOTES FOR THE BEST GAMES OF THE YEAR

With no pretense of being scientific—or even fair—we voted for the *OPM* Editor Awards this year the only way we really know how to: from the gut. The nomination list was formed from the highest scoring games of the year, and then every contributor to the magazine was asked to vote for his or her favorite in each category in a secret ballot. There was no statistical analysis involved, no concession for massive sales, and no peeking at the Game Rankings averages online—the results are purely based on what games we liked the most.

• • •

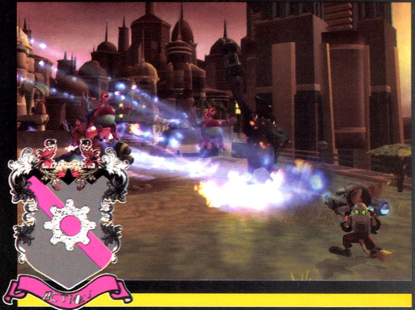
Next month, find out what games you voted for when we run the results from the 1UP Best of 2004 Awards.

✠

DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY

RUNNER UP: MORTAL KOMBAT: DECEPTION

2004 was a slow year for fighting games, with too many 2D reissues to mention, none of which raised the bar for anything except screwing you out of your cash. However, there was no argument as to which were the most innovative brawlers of the year, and *Def Jam* easily beat its way to the top with its gritty style and unexpectedly complex mix of wrestling and martial arts. *Mortal Kombat* made a noble showing thanks to its addictive minigames, but brawling in a burning warehouse trumps Puzzle Kombat hands down.



RATCHET & CLANK: UP YOUR ARSENAL

RUNNER UP: PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

With so many high-profile action games, all of which scored remarkably well throughout the year, picking an all-out winner was an emotional affair. Ultimately, *Ratchet & Clank* stole the vote thanks to its humor, irreverence, and focus on the most important thing in games: fun. Insomniac's conclusion to its PS2 trilogy was more focused on giving you a good time than just about any other game of the past year, something just about everyone agreed on. Props must go to Midway's *Psi-Ops* as a worthy runner-up, though. Its influence on the future of action games is undeniable, and we're sure you'll soon see lots of games that let you hurl crap around with the power of your mind. That's telekinesis, Kyle.

ADVENTURE
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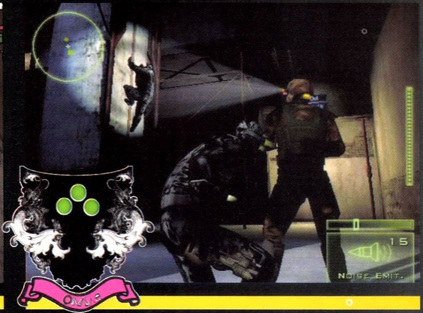
GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

RUNNER UP: METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

If the ballot hadn't been secret, there would probably have been an actual stripped-to-the-waist fight over this one. Voting between the PS2's highest-profile and most-loved franchises was neck and neck throughout the process, with the *Metal Gear* fanboys (and girls) in particular feeling the need to ensure that Mr. Snake won something. Our man in Japan even went so far as to throw all of his votes into one pot and submit *MGS3* as a write-in for every category, including those it wasn't appropriate for. In the end, though, *San Andreas* won, and we hardly need to explain its qualities here. If you don't know what they are, well…you don't deserve to.



SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMORROW

RUNNER UP: FINAL FANTASY XI

This was the big surprise of this little shindig. If you'd have rounded us all up in a room and asked us to predict the winner of the online category, we'd have probably said *Final Fantasy XI* without any question. We do, after all, have people on the *OPM* staff who have logged over 1,000 hours on the thing. If you dig your calculators out, you'll see that's more than 40 days and nights without stopping to sleep or go to the bathroom. How could it not win? Well, perhaps, and we're just guessing here, it's because there's someone on staff who has logged over 1,000 hours on the thing? *Pandora Tomorrow*, despite its obnoxiously elitist community, is an innovative and social experience that, as we said back in Issue #82, "may, for some of us at least, prove to be the best online game on PS2." How's that for a quality prediction?

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